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Karl Barth — 'Despiser' or 'Advocate' of Theology?

by H. Martin Rumscheidt

A simple sentence could answer the question the title raises. It also could end my address right now. The sentence is: Veritably, Barth was an advocate of theology. And *that* you all know.

But let us reflect why one would want to *ask* that question anyway. Perhaps you have just come across the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* of December 21, 1934, where on the front page the large-lettered headline jumped at you: "Karl Barth finally removed by the Minister of State." Was Barth not able to perform his teaching job with the competence the minister of state expected from professors? Our question could answer that.

Perhaps that question could help explain a curious fact to which Barth referred on his eightieth birthday. During the festivities, he coined a phrase which, I predict, will become a very apt description of how many a nation's government goes about its appointed task. *Dei providentia et hominis confusione Helvetia regitur.* (God's providence and man's confusion rule Switzerland). He coined this phrase in connection with that curious fact of which he was then speaking: three days after the Nazis had fired Barth, he received the invitation from Basel to teach dogmatics there. Now that was not curious; what was, was the fact that the invitation was issued after two city-fathers of Basel had persuaded the city's government to do so, and these two gentlemen—now comes the curiosity—were declared atheists. Was Barth "soft" enough in his theology that atheists could invite him to come to their city's renowned university? Our question could answer that.

Once more, perhaps our question could explain yet another unusual fact. You surely know that the main theological advocates, before and during the period of Barth's first ascendancy, loudly and critically *rejected* those minds who, according to Barth, raised

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An address delivered at Duke Divinity School on October 16, 1974, in connection with the Karl Barth Exhibition of the PRO HELVETIA FOUNDATION of Switzerland. Professor Rumscheidt, currently at the University of Windsor (Ontario), is author of *Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and editor of (Barth) *Fragments Grave and Gay* (London: Collins, 1971).

the *right* theological questions: Feuerbach, Strauss, Overbeck, the Blumhardts and, as we are seeing more and more clearly now, Marx. Now, if such figures excite you theologically, whereas the stars of your guild reject them, can you really be considered a serious partner in the enterprise? Our question could answer that.

Oddly enough, all three of these questions were answered in the affirmative at one time or another. The Nazis did say that Barth was not competent, according to their understanding of that word. The cold-war over the successor of Barth at Basel showed very clearly that the city fathers of 1962 thought Barth to be too soft on atheism and thus chose not the man the faculty of theology had thrice recommended unanimously. And during the 1920's, there was a very public wondering whether Barth could really be considered a *bona fide* theologian. The brightest stars in the academic sky then not only wondered but were sure that he could not. Jülicher opines that Barth is a gnostic; (is it not remarkable that Jülicher's successor at Marburg became Barth's ally—Bultmann!). Barth is filled with a holy egoism, Jülicher writes, ignoring utterly the sound work of scholars and thinking their conclusions to be dead stuff. He is a *Schwärmer*—an enthusiast like Müntzer, someone else argued, a mystic, a psychopathic young man. Did Barth despise or advocate theology? What would your conclusion have been in view of such comments—to be precise (for this is what they were meant to be) such epitaphs? I say epitaph quite intentionally. On the front page of the fiftieth anniversary issue of the famous and influential *Theologische Literaturzeitung* the then editor penned the following sentence: "These men are pouring water into their wine and will soon depart from the field of scientific theology." The writer—Adolf von Harnack.

If such polemics come from men of such caliber, and if the one thus criticized is a new-comer on the scene, someone without a doctorate, an ex country parson, a professor whose call had come about only because a number of private citizens had given a university enough money to hire him (people—so they exclaimed in Germany at that time—from America!!!), what chance was there for him to show that he really was a theologian?

Questions like these take us back to the "roaring twenties." In late 1967 Karl Barth wrote me that he hoped to be able to do someday what had just not been possible in those years. He wrote, "We could not have had genuine dialogue with understanding," and went on to express his desire for such dialogue when he would

eventually meet them again who in their lifetime had had it in for him. And he specifically named Harnack.

I am quite sure that, no matter on what side of that confrontation one would align oneself, that period was and still is a period of import for theologians and the history of theology. Import not simply because the best of liberal theology was under fire and therefore engaged in a self-examination (which is, I believe, not yet complete), but also because foundations were being laid for a new kind of theology which also is by no means complete yet. Before I say something about it and then attempt to answer the question of my title, let me set it into relief by commenting on the confrontation.

From Barth's correspondence with Thurneysen, which is now becoming available in a much expanded form, we know of Barth's private or semi-public discussion with his colleagues, notably Emmanuel Hirsch. These did not create the ripples or waves which, for example, articles or reviews in learned journals did. How fascinating it is to follow the attacks by the older and well-established academics and the counter-attacks of the younger men like Gogarten, Brunner, and even Tillich. One of these verbal matches occurred in early 1923, when, in five open letters, Harnack and Barth sparred in the widely read and respected *Die Christliche Welt*. Harnack began to voice his doubts about these younger men's theology in fifteen succinctly phrased questions addressed to the "despisers" of scientific theology. Barth responded; his fifteen also succinct answers were written in a single evening. Two more letters from Harnack and one quite long one from Barth followed, five letters in all between clearly the doyen of Continental Protestant theologians, world-famous, a key-note speaker at the World-Congress of Science in 1904 at St. Louis, and a young, angry Swiss professor teaching at Göttingen.

But now what is a "despiser" of theology in Harnack's view? It is someone in whose hands the gospel is lost, or in Harnack's own words (to Barth at a meeting in Eberhard Vischer's home in Basel, April 1920): "You are turning the gospel into a cheap export article." The loss results from that holy egoism of which Jülicher had spoken; it comes about because the very tools—so it seemed to the teachers—which they had used to find what the gospel really was were carelessly ignored by the students. Sure, these younger men knew the labors of the masters, but they recklessly, so it seemed, ignored the individual conclusions and the presuppositions on which they had been built. What the teachers, especially fol-

lowing Ritschl, held to be the essence of the Christian religion, the younger men said was at best the self-consciousness of bourgeois society. So they said *No* when the older scholars pointed out the significance of Christianity to and for culture. In fact, the young men asked whether their teachers did *theo*logy or *anthropo*theology. They asked: are you really speaking of *God* at all? Obviously that was a rhetorical question, for they believed themselves to live "between the times."

Can one be surprised that Harnack was concerned? That which he had spent his mature years on creating, a theology based on sound historical data, was in danger of being torn down, it seemed; no teacher likes to see that happening. Yet Harnack was a greater man than to go on the attack just because it looked as if someone was trying to demolish his work. He feared that theology would pass into the hands of gurus, would become the craft of occultists, of a new breed of gnostics, of a new *Marcion redivivus*. (This phrase comes from a footnote from the second edition of Harnack's still unsurpassed monograph on Marcion, on which he was working during this confrontation with Barth. In that footnote that phrase is quite clearly a description of Barth.)

Elsewhere I have set out in detail what Harnack means by "despising theology."* A summary must suffice here: despisers of theology are, according to Harnack, metaphysical, speculative, unhistorical, gnostic and occult in their theological outlook.

Instead of defending his own position, Barth counter-attacked. Again, that counterattack is analysed in detail in that work I just alluded to.** In summary, it amounts to a charge of having lost what is determinative in Christian theology: the self-manifestation of God to man in the gracious condescension of the Christ event.

Who was right? I am not inclined now to judge that issue; we are too close still to the protagonists. Yet we shall forever fail to assess either of the positions rightly if we make either this one or that one our own battle-station. But we can go on searching for an answer to our title.

Some historians of theology have been willing to assess Barth's work during those roaring years: Hendrikus Berkhof said what Barth did to and in theology was like a Copernican Revolution in Protestant theology. James Smart said it was a revolutionary

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* *Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1972, pp. 68-119.

** pp. 119-167.

theology in the making. Jürgen Moltmann suggests that a new foundation was laid for a theology of the gospel. John Cobb, Jr., calls it one of the most brilliant failures of all times. Statements such as these are best taken as historical descriptions of Barth's constructive notes during those years.

In these notes is manifest an activity, a thinking which reflects fundamentally differently on the problem which every theology must answer, since that problem determines the existence of theology: to what extent is *speech* about God really speaking about *God*? The fundamental difference between the younger theologians then and their teachers was that the former doubted that men really have available a *method* by which it is possible to grasp and comprehend the mystery men have forever called God and about which the Scriptures say that he revealed himself to man and has made covenants with him. If, therefore, theology is genuinely speech about God it must live by him to whom it points, Barth said. And, thus, the very first theological question is not *how* does one do that, but *can* one do that?

The matter of Barth's advocacy of theology rests, therefore, on what he says in response to that question, which in fact he had raised.

Bultmann, as you know, responded that since we cannot speak of God we are of necessity required to speak of man who is confronted by the mystery of God. Barth initially made sure that all the negatives he uttered to the various methods of comprehending the heart of religion—he, who is said to have revealed himself to men—that the negatives uttered were not a new method again of doing the same. The argument runs something like this:

"Theology is suspended in mid-air precisely in its primary presupposition. Its object is not 'on hand' but must be given to it ever anew." (Thurneysen). The total uncertainty of theology, resulting from its inability to presuppose God, is nothing but its liberation from the encounter with the real, the living, and not an imaginary God in the event of revelation. The recognition that God is not in the grasp of man is at one and the same time the confession of God's sovereignty. This means that God, when he reveals himself, becomes revealed as *God*. This statement is tautological on the surface only; it does in fact testify to God's freedom for man and to his freedom in the encounter with man. It speaks of the liberation of theology from illusion, for objectivity, or, as we said above, for genuinely speaking of God.

Here, right here, arises what people seized upon when they named Barth's a "dialectical theology." For, the argument continued, that God is not an invention of man, and that, therefore, man is not secretly divine but *man,* becomes apparent above all in that God's revelation of himself to man is not one of correspondence with man, but one of contradiction to him. If God does appear in man's horizons, he does so neither as the climax of man's perceptions nor as the answer to his questions or quest, but rather as the radicalization, as the iconoclasm, of man's questions and quest. If, therefore, a method is apparent here, it is—in the marvellous expression Gabriel Vahanian uses—*waiting without idols.* I would maintain that Barth maintains this stance throughout his writings, even when the thunderous *totaliter aliter* gives way to the *analogia fidei,* the divine bringing of man into correspondence with revelation.

But now we have moved out of the twenties, away from the debate where "there was no way that we could have really discussed this matter with each other," as Barth phrased it before he died. Still, we are left with the question: if he is no despiser of theology, how is he its advocate? And I would now—in a final section—speak about what I regard as Barth's advocacy.

Again the twenties already show what it was: in the attack on what was held to be the *conditio sine qua non* for theologizing at all, namely the need to locate the enterprise in the "historical" (Harnack), the "cultural" (Ritschl) or the "psychic" (Otto), or—moving to the rather different camp—in a biblicism of Scriptural inspiration *cum* verbal inerrancy, in that attack lies the ovum of Barth's waiting without idols for no other God but him whom the Church addresses as Yahweh.

Karl Gerhard Steck called that attack Barth's rebuff to modernity. He attacked the absolutization or canonization of anything that would then be placed as an absolute alongside the evangelical assertion that God's wisdom is both scandalous and foolishness to man. It is not that the dimensions or phenomena of history, of culture, of the psyche—indeed of religion—are rebuffed; they are—so I judge that pipe-smoking, Mozart-loving man to have meant it—dimensions of man's activity and life and are to be enjoyed *as such.* The rebuff comes when they are taken to be normative for the comprehension of the truth of Yahweh, and it is a rebuffing of theologizing in such a way that speech concerning God celebrates any particularity, such as the depth-dimension of experience

as final reality and highest law. (*Church Dogmatics* I/2—669.) But such absolutizing is for Barth also the relativization of the gospel.

So Barth asks about the right self-preservation of theology. In 1938 he asserted that all efforts to ground theology anywhere but in its appropriate object indicate that theology no longer regards itself as theology. On January 8, 1957, he said that 19th-century man could well have taken theology more seriously had it not taken *him* so dreadfully seriously. Could that be a quotable quote perhaps also about us?

Many have interpreted Barth's unrelenting search for the specific concern of Christian theology as a drive to build walls behind which theology can do its ivory-towering. "Monologue in heaven," Heinz Zahrnt calls it. But should one really not know better than that? That advocacy of theology was not meant to hold back speech concerning man, culture, history and—ah yes!—philosophy. No, this continuous digging is there so that theology will claim its truth precisely for its statement about man, world, etc. You see, we all know that much has been and is being said about man, which depicts a humanity in which there really are no fellow-humans. In the big anthropology of *Church Dogmatics* III/2, Barth cites examples, Goethe notably among them, of people who in their cultural and intellectual horizon speak often movingly of genuine humanness without being *Mitmenschen* themselves. We are warned against being led into the error that one can speak of man without first and very concretely having spoken of God (*The Humanity of God*—p. 57).

I still think that this warning must be heeded: if, as Barth thinks, the theologians of the 18th century could sell their birthright for the lentil-dish of Cartesianism, for what dish will we be ready to sell ours? Let it suffice to add that we cannot afford to sell it for "Barthianism"—an orthodoxy of Barth's Dogmatics—for we must ask ourselves, if the Word of God is not at our disposal through Cartesianism, can it be at our disposal through Barth's Dogmatics?

Asbury's Doctrine of Ministry

by David C. Steinmetz

Studies of the meaning of ordination in the United Methodist Church have appealed, as any study should, to the biblical, historical and practical dimensions of the problem. Biblical studies over the last twenty years have clarified many of the problems of Church order in the New Testament and have made it apparent to all that pluriformity in the Church's order and structure belongs to the earliest decades of the Church's life and is not a later development. Similarly, Wesley's understanding of ordination with its slow and painful development and its unresolved ambiguities has been discussed at some length by such divergent commentators as Franz Hildebrandt and Frank Baker. And, of course, Methodists have not been slow to heed the analysis of the sociologists, who have dispassionately examined the ministry from the standpoint of its observed functions and measurable impact upon society.

Yet in all these discussions of ordination and of ministry in the United Methodist Church, there has been little, if any, reference to the role of Francis Asbury in shaping the theology of ordination and the understanding of ministry among the early Methodists in America. The reasons for this neglect are understandable. While Asbury is Wesley's equal in administrative gifts and his superior in understanding the unique situation posed by the American frontier, he is clearly Wesley's inferior as a theologian. Furthermore, Asbury, while not slavishly dependent on Wesley's opinions and willing to oppose him in matters of strategy, certainly did not intend to deviate at any point from the Wesleyan standards of doctrine. It could conceivably be argued that Asbury's theology is nothing more than a homespun and simplified copy of Wesley's.

Still there are differences. Though Asbury is an avid reader of theology his life long and even learns Hebrew while on horseback, he is not university trained and lacks the university-trained concern with the delicate shades of less and more. Decisions which are difficult for Wesley and which are arrived at only after a long and painful process of setting aside dearly held beliefs are relatively easy for Asbury to assent to. The break with Anglicanism, once

it is deemed necessary, is quick, clean and without tears. Asbury has the plain man's interest in conclusions, not the scholar's fascination with arguments. If it must be, so be it. Asbury is even more consistent than Wesley in drawing out the implications of Wesley's decision to ordain, much to Wesley's own discomfiture and annoyance. Of all the characters in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* who bear no resemblance to Francis Asbury, he is least like Mr. Ready-to-halt.

For nearly forty-five years (from Sunday, October 27, 1771, when Francis Asbury arrived in Philadelphia from Bristol, England, until Sunday, March 31, 1816, when he died in Spotsylvania, Virginia) he made his impact felt on the American scene. He enforced discipline in Philadelphia, even if it resulted in a temporary loss of membership and was opposed by certain of the other ministers. He restrained his fellow-workers from the administration of the sacraments—with one exception—until the separation with Anglicanism occurred and then defended the validity of Methodist orders against all comers. His vision of the ministry, most fully elaborated in his valedictory address to Bishop McKendree, written in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on August 5, 1813, was indelibly imprinted on the early Methodist conferences, even in the face of the O'Kelly schism.

Wesley's understanding of ordination had been colored by his Anglican upbringing. When Wesley left for America as a missionary, he believed firmly in the historic episcopate and apostolic succession, even to the extent of denying the validity of baptisms performed by non-episcopally ordained clergymen. The Lutherans had no right to celebrate the eucharist. Only Anglican (and, of course, Roman Catholic) priests had received valid ordinations.

How Wesley changed his mind is too long and complicated a story to be told here. He came to believe, after reading Lord Peter King's *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the Primitive Church,* that presbyters and bishops do not differ in order, but only in degree. That is to say, that both bishops and presbyters have the same power to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to ordain, but in the interest of good order in the Church the right to ordain, which belongs to every presbyter, has been restricted in its exercise to the bishop. Nevertheless, in an emergency situation presbyters can ordain and can even consecrate a duly elected presbyter as bishop. The notion of apostolic succession Wesley abandoned as a myth. There is no single Scriptural polity in the sense that one form of Church government and it alone is prescribed by Scripture. Still in all, the Anglican polity of

bishops, presbyters and deacons is Scriptural, in the sense that it is compatible with Scriptural principles.

Wesley remained true to the Anglican tradition in his separation of the ministry of the Word, which could be carried on by lay preachers much less by a deacon, and the ministry of the sacraments, which could only be performed by ministers who were properly ordained. Laymen can preach, deacons can preach and baptize, and elders or presbyters can preach, baptize and celebrate communion.

While Wesley claimed the authority of King—and also of Stillingfleet—for the ordination of Coke as Superintendent and his companions as clergy for the American Church, he did not follow the pattern recommended by them. He did not seek the majority decision of the English Methodist ministers, much less of the American Methodists, before ordaining Coke. In a sense Wesley ordained without the explicit consent of the Methodist Church and therefore ordained on his own authority. He substituted Wesleyan succession for apostolic succession. This was a state of affairs which Asbury found disagreeable and which he did not permit to be repeated in his own ordination to the episcopacy. Indeed, one may well ask whether Coke arrived in America as anything more than a presbyter of the Church of England. Certainly, he was not a bishop in Anglican eyes. It is doubtful whether he was one on Methodist principles either.

Asbury's understanding of ordination was much less nuanced but far more consistent than Wesley's. The threefold pattern of bishops, elders and deacons is the pattern for the government of the Church prescribed in Scripture. The bishops are the successors of the apostles and carry on their ministry of itinerant evangelism. All three orders have the right to preach, and both elders and bishops have the right to celebrate the Lord's Supper. As far as their sacramental function is concerned—and the sacramental aspect of ordination is the aspect which least interests Asbury—bishops and elders are equal.

Yet there is a more fundamental sense in which bishops and elders are not equal. The bishop has been set apart both to serve as the *pastor pastorum* and as the overseer of the Church's ministry. Since ordination to the office of bishop is ordination to a permanent status, barring abuse of the office, the bishop is the permanent chairman of the conference of elders and their perpetual overseer. As regards the proclamation of the gospel, all preachers are on the same level, whether lay or ordained. As regards the celebration

of the sacraments, all elders and bishops are on the same plane. But as regards the exercise of disciplinary authority in the Church, the bishop is on a permanently higher plane than the presbyters. One must also conclude, especially in view of the O'Kelly schism, that the bishop is superior to the Conference as well. Asbury observed in his *Journal*:

> I recollect having read, some years since, Ostervald's Christian Theology; having a wish to transcribe a few sentiments in the work, I met with it, and extracted from chap. 2, page 317, what follows. 'Yet it cannot be denied that in the primitive Church there was always a president who presided over others, who were in a state of equality with himself: this is clearly proved from the catalogues of bishops to be found in Eusebius and others; in them we may see the names of the bishops belonging to the principal Churches, many of whom were ordained whilst the apostles (but especially John) were still living.' So far Mr. Ostervald, who, I presume, was a Presbyterian. In Cave's Lives of the Fathers, and in the writings of the ancients, it will appear that the Churches of Alexandria, and elsewhere, had large congregations, many elders; that the apostles might appoint and ordain bishops. Mr. Ostervald, who, it appears, is a candid and well-informed man, has gone as far as might be expected for a Presbyterian. For myself, I see but a hair's breadth difference between the sentiments of the respectable and learned author of Christian Theology, and the practice of the Methodist Episcopal Church. There is not—nor indeed, in my mind, can there be—a perfect equality between a constant president, and those over whom he always presides.
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> *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury,* II, 289-90.

That is not to say that all *episkope,* all disciplinary authority in the Church, resides in the person of the bishop. Discipline and authority are shared by elders, deacons, lay preachers, exhorters, class leaders—indeed, by all officers. But in all disputed matters the final decision is the bishop's. He is not the sole authority, but as permanent president he is the highest.

Immediately after his consecration as superintendent (which Coke, Asbury and Charles Wesley understood to be an ordination as bishop, even if John Wesley was reluctant to use the term), Asbury donned the vestments of an Anglican bishop. He quickly removed them again when they provoked unfavorable comment and jokes among the rough-hewn frontier preachers. Nevertheless, the use of the vestments signifies that Asbury understood his election and consecration to be ordination to the office of a bishop, a successor of the apostles, with as much right—in Asbury's mind, more right—to wear the regalia of a bishop as any bishop of the Church of England.

When his authority as bishop was challenged, Asbury appealed to a fivefold base:

> I will tell the world what I rest my authority upon. 1. Divine authority. 2. Seniority in America. 3. The election of the General Conference. 4. My ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbein, German Presbyterian minister, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey. 5. Because the signs of an apostle have been seen in me.
>
> *JLFA,* II, 469-70.

Divine authority—the office of a bishop is Scriptural, however much the Presbyterians may deny it or the Anglicans abuse it.

Seniority in America—he was the Father in God of many of the preachers in the Methodist connection, quite apart from his election to be their overseer. Even without election and consecration, he had a certain claim on the loyalty of the Methodist itinerants.

The election of the General Conference—no one could accuse Asbury of the same shaky basis for his consecration as bishop as Coke could claim for his. The Conference had consented to his ordination. The elders had chosen one of their number as bishop as it was their inherent and primitive right to do.

Ordination by Coke, Otterbein, Whatcoat and Vasey—no Presbyterian could argue with the legitimacy of Asbury's ordination nor could any Episcopalian who accepted the theories of King and Stillingfleet. It was as good a Presbyterian ordination as any Reformed Church could offer; as good an Episcopalian ordination as the primitive Church had given.

The signs of an apostle—here is the Wesleyan note. *Medicus non est qui non medetur.* The physician is known by his cures. Apostolic succession is not conferred by digital contact with an Anglican bishop. The only succession which matters is succession in apostolic doctrine and practice. And the mark of this apostolic succession is, as some wag once noted, apostolic success. Who had more right to be called a bishop? The Anglican divine sipping port in his palace after a leisurely afternoon of calling at the salons of his wealthier parishioners, or the rugged son of a Staffordshire gardener crossing the Appalachians on a pony in order to preach at some remote farmhouse in Tennessee? The sign of apostolicity is to be under orders and not merely in them.

Asbury concurred with Wesley's pointed questions to the Anglican bishop who took "unfashionable pains" to examine his candidates for Holy Orders:

> Examining them! In what respects? Why, whether they understand a little *Latin* and *Greek* and can answer a few trite questions in the science of divinity! Alas, how little does this avail! Does your Lordship examine whether they serve *Christ* or *Belial*? whether they love God or the world? whether they ever had any serious thoughts about heaven or hell? whether they have any real desire to save their own souls or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with Holy Orders? and what will become of the souls committed to their care?
>
> *The Letters of John Wesley*, VII, 31.

The chief mark of the apostolicity of the Methodist episcopate was its itinerant character. It was Asbury's contention that the bishops were the successors of the apostles and therefore like them were itinerant evangelists. It was not until the second century that bishops became identified with one diocese, that—to use the Methodist technical term—they located. This location of bishops marks the fall of the episcopate from its former glory. So far from regarding the Anglican episcopate as complete with the Methodist a pale imitation of it, Asbury believed the exact reverse to be true. Authentic episcopacy, lost for centuries, has now been restored in the polity of the Methodist Church. Like the Apostles, and unlike the Greeks, Latins and Anglicans, Methodist bishops are itinerants.

> I am bold to say that the apostolic order of things was lost in the first century, when Church governments were adulterated and had much corruption attached to them. At the Reformation the reformers only beat off a part of the rubbish which put a stop to the rapid increase of absurdities at that time; but how they have increased since! Recollect the state of the different Churches, as it respects government and discipline in the seventeenth century when the Lord raised up that great and good man, John Wesley, who formed an evangelical society in England. In 1784, an apostolical form of Church government was formed in the United States of America at the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland.
>
> *JLFA*, III, 475-76.

While itinerancy was essential to the nature of authentic episcopacy, celibacy belonged to its *bene esse*. It may be embarrassing to realize that the first bishop of the Methodist Church was not only a bachelor, but even defended celibacy and urged his presbyters to imitate him (as he imitated St. Paul) in pursuing a celibate life. It was not possible to carry out the functions of authentic episcopacy with a wife and family. The man who marries must assume his family obligations. He cannot really fulfil the obligations of itinerancy. Asbury is not opposed to marriage for laymen, but is convinced that it is not a suitable state for Methodist preach-

ers. His journal is full of wry comments about preachers he has lost either to the devil or to the women. Family life means location, the settled parish, Presbyterianism (in Church government if not in doctrine!).

> Marriage is honorable in all—but to me it is a ceremony awful as death. Well may it be so, when I calculate we have lost the travelling labours of two hundred of the best men in America, or the world, by marriage and consequent location.
>
> *JLFA*, II, 474.

While one can construct a fully developed theory of the episcopate from Asbury's *Journal* and letters, it is more difficult to describe the role of the elder and deacon. They share in the same ministry of Word and Sacraments, but differ principally in the degree of authority which they exercise.

Laymen, of course, are not represented at the level of the Conference. The government of the Church is in the hands of the travelling preachers. The ministry appoints the ministry. That is the Methodist *via media* between the Anglican delegation of sacramental authority from the bishop to the elders and the conferral of authority on the minister by the laity in Congregationalist polity. If a layman wishes to share in the government of the Church, let him become a travelling preacher!

Conclusion

There is not time to question Asbury about his understanding of the episcopate—to ask, for example, in what way the understanding of the episcopate proposed by the Consultation on Church Union corrects Asbury's teaching or needs to be corrected by him. There is only time to summarize his understanding of the ministry as a necessary prologue to that further discussion.

1. The threefold ministry of bishops, elders and deacons is the N.T. pattern.

2. The authority of the Methodist ministry was not conferred on it by the people called Methodists but was conferred through already existing ministries. Through Coke the Methodist ministry stands in succession to the Anglican Mother Church; through Otterbein it is linked to the Continental Reformation. The ministry appoints the ministry.

3. Bishops, elders and deacons share in the ministry of Word and Sacrament. All share equally in the ministry of the Word; deacons only partially in the ministry of the Sacraments.

4. Bishops differ from elders solely in administrative authority.

5. The office of a bishop is a permanent office. He is not merely an elder who returns to his place among the other elders when his term of office is completed.

6. Bishops are successors of the apostles and therefore must discharge the function of an itinerant evangelist. Itinerancy belongs to the *esse* of the episcopate, while it belongs only to the *bene esse* of the office of elder or deacon.

7. The first Methodist elders were ordained by Anglican and Reformed elders, since elders have the inherent right to ordain.

8. These elders then consecrated one of their number as permanent president or bishop.

9. The validity of Methodist orders is proven by the success of the Methodist Church in the discharge of its mission to convert the unchurched and to spread Scriptural holiness. They are a people whom God owns.

Conversing with the Text

Application of Conversational Exegesis to Hosea 4:1-3

by R. Michael Casto

This article is the second of a three-part series which attempts (1) to describe for the pastor a methodology for the discovery of the historical meaning of the biblical text,[1] (2) to illustrate that methodology through the study of Hosea 4:1-3, and (3) to discuss the assumptions and problems associated with the transition to a contemporary meaning and to illustrate that transition with respect to Hosea 4:1-3.[2] The text will be considered only from the point of view of easily available English translations.[3]

Listening to the Text

When first read in the RSV, the text might easily sound like a description of the United States in the mid-1970's. Lack of "faithfulness," "kindness," and "knowledge of God," (v. 1) are akin to much of the criticism that is levied against contemporary American society. The specific transgressions, "swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery," (v. 2) could easily sound like the catalogue of indiscretions and crimes which confront one in the daily newspaper. Even the results of these crimes, "mourn" and "languish," (v. 3) are comparable to the emotional responses which are often made to the difficulties of contemporary life.

While the pastor may initially find such points of contact between the current situation and the text, questions may be raised about the similarity of these two societies, the appropriateness of making such comparisons, and the actual meaning of the words

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1. John Bradley White, "Conversing with the Text: Old Testament Exegesis—A Part of the Pastor's Job Description," *Duke Divinity School Review*, XXXIX (Fall, 1974), 153-180.

2. Part III, by David C. Hester, follows in this issue of the *Duke Divinity School Review*.

3. This discussion will be based on the King James Version (KJV), the New English Bible (NEB), and the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

in the RSV. The summons to "Hear" is specifically addressed to the "people of Israel" (v. 1). Is it acceptable for 20th century persons to understand themselves as also being addressed by that word? The controversy in the text is between Yahweh (the Lord) and "the inhabitants of the land" (v. 1). Is it appropriate to identify this group with those who inhabit America (or any other country) in 1975? Do the words "faithfulness," "kindness," and "knowledge of God" (v. 1) convey in English the meaning of the corresponding Hebrew terms? What is the significance of the imagery (" the land mourns") in v. 3, and how can that image be translated into language that is meaningful in today's world? These and other questions may help the pastor focus on the text, the modern situation, and the problem of the relationship between the two.

An even closer listening to the text may reveal subtleties which might otherwise be overlooked. The preliminary discussion has already hinted that there are three separate aspects to these verses: (1) an introduction (v. 1a) in which Israel is implored to "Hear" and given a brief reason for this call to attention; (2) an indictment or statement of what is wrong "in the land" (vv. 1b-2); and (3) a judgment in which the effects of this wrongdoing are stated (v. 3). In this same connection it is noted that there is a change of tense from the indictment to the judgment; the former states the present, ongoing condition, while the latter indicates a future situation or condition. Even though the indictment is specific and quite physical in its description, the judgment seems less so.

Finally, the limits initially chosen for the text are reinforced by the use of the standard introductory formula, "Hear the word of the Lord," which separates this unit from what precedes, and at the end by the appearance in v. 4 of the sharply disjunctive "yet" (NEB "but"). On the other hand, vv. 1-3 gain continuity with vv. 4ff because of the repetition of the term "charge" (v. 1) in v. 4 (NEB) and the concern with "knowledge" in vv. 1 and 6. Throughout chapter 4 the speaker is Yahweh (with the exception of the summons in 1a). However, in vv. 4ff the addressee shifts from Israel to "the priests."

Thus, the preliminary encounter between the pastor and Hosea 4:1-3 may reveal several observations about the structure and content of the text in its present form, as well as its meaning for today's world. Each of these observations raises a question with respect to its accuracy and importance for the interpretation of the text. These questions will serve as the beginning point for the pastor's dialogue with the text. They in turn will raise new ques-

tions which must be examined before an accurate interpretation of the text can be made. These preliminary observations/questions must now be examined more carefully using the tools of exegesis, but always keeping in the forefront of the discussion the goal of conversing with the text on an equal basis. Not only should the pastor challenge the text, but the text should also raise questions which challenge the pastor.

Text Criticism

While there are no serious problems in the Hebrew text of Hosea 4:1-3, several differences are apparent when the English translations are compared.[4] The first is that while the RSV and KJV refer to a "controversy" in v. 1, the NEB uses the word "charge." The latter emphasizes the formal legal character of vv. 1-3 which might be overlooked in a quick reading of the other two texts. Although it is not immediately obvious why this distinction is important for the interpretation of the text, it will be shown in the discussion of the form of the passage that the legal character of Hosea 4:1-3 is decisive for one's understanding of it, both in its ancient setting and in its contemporary applications. The charge has authority not merely because the prophet claims that it originates with God, but because he can demonstrate that Israel has broken the terms of the covenant agreement made with God.

A wide range of meanings is given in the translations for the second of the missing 'virtues" in v. 1 (RSV: "kindness"; NEB: "mutual trust"; KJV: "mercy"). This variety reflects the difficulty of precisely translating the Hebrew into English rather than any uncertainty about the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, that variety poses a problem for the pastor doing English exegesis, since each of the three translations has a somewhat different meaning. "Mutual trust" does not necessarily have anything to do with "kindness" or "mercy," and one can be kind without necessarily being merciful or trustworthy. The importance of this difficulty should not be underestimated since it might influence the interpretation of the text and therefore the direction of a potential sermon or any other use to which Hosea 4:1-3 might be put. The problem is, however, one which is better solved in the discussion of "Content

4. The discussion of textual problems is entirely dependent upon the English translations. This is not in order to diminish the importance of biblical languages in solving these problems, but to illustrate to those who are not proficient in them the values of text criticism. It is assumed that those who have training in the biblical languages are also familiar with at least the importance if not the methods of text criticism.

Criticism" since it is a matter of interpretation/translation rather than a textual discussion.

In v. 2 there are serious differences in the translations of the RSV, KJV and NEB. A series of specific transgressions is followed by "licence" (NEB), "they break out" (KJV), or "they break all bounds" (RSV). The intention of the RSV and KJV seems to be to add a general transgression. The NEB, on the other hand, interprets the Hebrew word under question as adding force to the specific charge of adultery. At this point the interpreter working from the English reaches an impasse, the solution to which is dependent upon a knowledge of Hebrew. If he or she turns to the commentaries, it is clear that none of the three English translations cited is acceptable to the commentators. Mays,[5] Wolff,[6] and Ward[7] all understand the five transgressions as the collective subject of the disputed element, which they translate as a verb. Once again, however, we are confronted with a translation difficulty rather than a textual problem. In the discussion of "Tradition History" we will attempt to solve this difficulty.[8]

In v. 3 there are two differences in translation which have a profound bearing on the outcome of the exegesis. The first is the difference between "dried up" (NEB) and "mourn" (KJV and RSV). Here it is not a matter of the interpretation of the Hebrew (as was the case with "kindness" vs. "mutual trust") but of identifying the verb in the Hebrew text. It is one of two identical roots which have different meanings. One verb means "mourns" and the other means "dried up." At this point the exegete working with

5. James L. Mays, *Hosea, A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 60. This volume is a part of the Old Testament Library series, the best series for the pastor who is limited to the English text. Its emphasis is on theological discussion based on sound exegesis.

6. Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 65. This volume is a part of the new series, Hermeneia, which promises to provide an excellent resource for both pastor and scholar.

7. James M. Ward, *Hosea, A Theological Commentary* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 75. Unfortunately now out of print, this is very useful, whether or not one is limited to English translations.

8. Both Mays (p. 60) and Wolff (p. 65) add "in the land" following the disputed verb of v. 2, in agreement with the LXX (the so-called Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament). The omission of this phrase is explained on the basis of homoioteleuton (the accidental omission of a word at the end of a line because of its similarity to another word at the end of a preceding or following line—in this case "in the land" appears at the end of v. 1, and it is argued that this caused the omission in v. 2 at the time of copying). While this particular example is significant for the restoration of the text, its impact on the interpretation of the text is minimal.

the English text must consult the commentaries. Harper[9] adopts the translation "mourns." In a note on the text, however, he indicates that the reason for this mourning by the people in the land is a severe drought. This reference to a condition of drought is incorporated into the translations of Mays ("dry up"),[10] Wolff ("wither"), [11] and Ward ("wither"). [12] Ward also provides a sketch of the reasons behind his preference for "wither": the way in which the Hebrew word is used in other places in the Old Testament. This methodology may be practiced to a limited degree in English exegesis by consulting a good concordance.[13] When this is done it is discovered that when this ambiguous verb is used in connection with soil, land or plants (as it is in Hosea 4:3) it is usually associated with parallel verbs meaning "to be dry" or "to wither." Therefore, it may be concluded that the translation "dried up" (NEB) is the more accurate.

In addition to the external evidence provided by the use of a concordance, the NEB translation may be strengthened by examining the parallelism of the passage itself. The other verbs in the verse (NEB: to pine away, to be swept from) indicate a physically disastrous change. This is clarified by Wolff, who argues for the translation "fade away" for the second of the three verbs in v. 3.[14] While the pastor must always view such an argument with caution, since it is based on the form of the passage rather than on linguistic data, when added to the lexical information cited above about the verb in question, the translation of the NEB, "dried up," is given added support.

It may be asked, "What difference does this decision make for the interpretation of the text?" The NEB translation adds concreteness and force to the message of Hosea. In the RSV and KJV, on the other hand, there is a somewhat unintelligible reference to an emotional reaction *by* the land. It is much more straightforward to see v. 3 as describing the effects of breaking the covenant (vv. 1b

9. William R. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* (The International Critical Commentary: Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1905), p. 251. Although the theological and historical discussions of this series are dated, its work with the Hebrew text is in general helpful and accurate.

10. Mays, p. 60.

11. Wolff, p. 65.

12. Ward, p. 75.

13. Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 22nd American Edition Revised, 1936). This volume is especially helpful since it provides the form of the word in the biblical languages as well as its English translation as found in the KJV.

14. Wolff, p. 68.

and 2), first *on* the land itself, then on those who inhabit it, and finally extending to the beasts, birds and fish. The NEB adds concreteness, accuracy and ease of understanding, and uses the standard element of Hebrew poetry, parallelism, to communicate the text.

Another major variation in translation is the use in v. 3 of the present tense in the RSV and the future tense in the NEB and KJV. Mays points out that it is a question of the English tense by which the Hebrew should be rendered.[15] This is a continuing problem for translators of the Bible, and here it has a bearing on both the limits of the passage and its meaning. If the English present tense is used as is suggested by Harper[16] and Ward[17] and adopted by the RSV, then v. 3 is part of the indictment of Israel and should properly be seen in conjunction with vv. 4ff.[18] If, however, one adopts the position of Wolff[19] and Mays[20] and the translations of the NEB and KJV, then v. 3 is the judgment which follows from the indictment (vv. 1b and 2), and the unit logically concludes at the end of v. 3. (The NEB ignores the sense of its own translation and continues the unit through v. 4.) Since the Hebrew will bear either translation with no difficulty, other means which go beyond the scope of text criticism must be employed to arrive at a conclusion. Therefore, this problem will be deferred until the form of the passage is discussed. It is, however, a critical question for the interpreter because it determines not only the bounds of the unit, but also whether or not the "charge" is directed against Israel as a whole or only against specific groups within Israelite society.

Literary Criticism

The question of the authorship of Hosea 4:1-3 is one of the most difficult problems that must be confronted. While the material in vv. 1-3 is in the third person and is attributed to God, vv. 4ff are in the first person. This change of person indicates that the text is a collection of oracles. This raises the possibility that some of the material of chapter 4 may have been added by the editor who arranged them.

15. Mays, p. 62.
16. Harper, p. 251.
17. Ward, p. 77.
18. The RSV has a clear break between vv. 3 and 4 and thus ignores, as does the NEB (see below), the implications of the form of the passage for translation.
19. Wolff, p. 65.
20. Mays, p. 62.

Few commentaries even consider this problem. Harper includes vv. 1-3 in a list of oracles attributable to Hosea.[21] But he offers no discussion of his reasons for this decision. In contrast, Good indicates (on the basis of a form critical analysis which we shall discuss below) that vv. 1-3 probably did not originate in oral form as did most of the rest of the book.[22] Since it is generally assumed[23] that a collector/editor, and not Hosea himself, was responsible for the final form of the book, Good implies that vv. 1-3 were composed by an editor as a general introduction to the following oracles. However, it is possible that the compiler may have done nothing other than collect and arrange individual units of oral tradition. Furthermore, there are affinities between vv. 1-3 and the rest of chapters 4-14 which indicate their relationship to each other (e.g., in both 4:1 and 4:4 the word "charge" [NEB] appears, tying the thought of the two verses together; in 4:1 and 4:6, 6:6, and 8:2 there is a concern with "knowing" God). While this evidence is inconclusive, the form critical analysis which follows will provide indications of the oral character of vv. 1-3, and therefore, strengthen the argument for the authorship of these verses by Hosea.[24]

When did Hosea 4:1-3 originate? There are no concrete historical allusions which would aid in dating the unit, nor are there any peculiarities of style or language which could help answer the question. Thus, the exegete must turn to the rest of the book for information on dating. This information may then be used in dating 4:1-3 if its relationship to 4:4-14:9 can be adequately defined.

The historical setting of the book falls for the most part between 747 and 722 B.C. in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.[25] According to 1:1, we know that an editor of the book placed the beginning of Hosea's prophetic ministry before the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (d. 746 B.C.) and ending after Hezekiah of Judah began his reign (715 B.C.). There are possible allusions to the Syro-Ephramite invasion of Judah (735-733 B.C.) in 5:8-15. The

21. Harper, p. clx.

22. Edwin M. Good, "The Composition of Hosea," *Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*, XXXI (1966), 53.

23. See e.g., Wolff, pp. xxix-xxx and Mays, pp. 15-17.

24. Mays, p. 66, supports this position.

25. The information for this discussion comes mainly from James M. Ward, "The Message of the Prophet Hosea," *Interpretation*, XXIII (1969), 388f. (This journal should be read by any pastor wishing to keep abreast of the latest developments in biblical studies, theology, and the interpretation of the Bible.) A similar discussion will also be found in Mays, pp. 3-5.

political instability of Israel's last years is alluded to in 7:3-7 and 8:4-10. According to Ward the final editing of the book occurred for the benefit of a Judean audience between the time of Judah's survival of the Assyrian siege in 701 B.C. and her destruction in 587 B.C. (1:7 is such an obvious editorial gloss that the editors of the NEB have relegated it to the status of a footnote. According to Ward, this verse serves as evidence of the last editing of the book.)

If it can be shown (and this position will be argued in the form critical discussion) that 4:1-3 is a part of the oral material originating with Hosea, then one may conclude that the oracle originated sometime before the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. The mention in v. 2 of "one deed of blood after another" may be a reference to the internal political intrigues of 745/746 which resulted in the assassination of two successive kings, Zechariah and Shallum. Although this conclusion is far from certain, since the situation described in v. 2 could also fit other periods in Hosea's ministry, it is given added strength by the observation that the transgressions mentioned in v. 2 have to do with the individual's relationship to his or her neighbor. Thus, the emphasis seems to be on internal difficulties rather than international strife. This description best fits the period prior to the death of Jeroboam II. From the point of view of the interpretation of the passage, this conclusion helps the exegete see the focus of Hosea's prophecy in 4:1-3 as centering more on the problems of internal societal decay than on external threats.

The final concern of the literary criticism of Hosea 4:1-3 is the intention of the unit. This question is also tied to the form of the passage. However, some tentative answers may be given in isolation from the form critical analysis which will follow. If, as Good states, vv. 1-3 are a "generalizing introduction"[26] to chapters 4-14, then one must distinguish between its function as introduction and the intention of the original author. Both purposes must be respected when we consider the meaning of the text in the contemporary situation.

The reference to "mutual trust" (v. 1, NEB) brings into use covenant terminology which has its origins in the ancient tribal confederation prior to the establishment of the monarchy. V. 2

26. Good, p. 30.

suggests that the Israelites have violated the requirements of the covenant as set forth in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2-17 and Dt. 5:6-21). The sixth, seventh and eighth commandments are mentioned specifically as having been violated.

Therefore, one of the central concerns of Hosea 4:1-3 is to point out ways in which Israel is at variance with her ancient traditions, which are valid criteria for judging contemporary actions of the people. In this way, while not speaking of specific crimes (e.g., the assassination of a particular king), Hosea is able not only to communicate the historical significance of the ancient traditions, but also to provide a normative standard for behavior. These traditions would hold particular significance for a prophet from the North such as Hosea, since it was in the Northern Kingdom that the amphictyonic traditions were maintained with tenacity.[27] The theological significance of this relationship between Israel and her traditions is expressed by the form of the oracle and is of particular importance for the interpreter of the passage. If one is to interpret Hosea's message faithfully, and if that message is bound up in the prophet's understanding of Israel's relationship to her traditions, then that relationship must be clearly grasped by the interpreter. Therefore, the literary analysis gives direction to the interpreter's continued conversation with the text. That direction leads next to an investigation of the form of the passage.

Form Criticism

An analysis of the form of Hosea 4:1-3 will help one understand the original function and message of the oracle, and also identify one way in which that oracle communicated with those who listened to it throughout the history of its transmission. That the form of a particular piece of material communicates as much as its content is one of the basic assumptions of form criticism. Thus it becomes important for the interpreter to understand the form of every passage with which he or she works.

There is little disagreement over the basic form of Hosea 4:1-3. Most commentaries see these verses as a legal controversy (lawsuit)

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27. In addition to Mays, pp. 1-3, the Northern origins of Hosea's work are discussed by Hans Walter Wolff, "Hoseas geistige Heimat," *Theologische Bucherei*, XXII (1964), 232-250. A good discussion (in English) of Wolff's work may be found in J. F. Craghan, "The Book of Hosea: A Survey of Recent Literature on the First of the Minor Prophets," *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, I (1971), 81-100 and II (1971), 145-170.

signaled by the presence in v. 1 of the word "charge" (NEB).[28] The lawsuit (Hebrew:*rîb*) form consists of the following elements as they appear in Hosea 4:1-3 (NEB):

I. Summons to hear (1a)
   A. Identification of the addressees ("O Israel")
   B. Naming of the accuser ("the Lord")
   C. Employment of technical legal terminology ("charge")
   D. Naming of the defendants ("the people of the land")

II. The accusation or indictment
   A. In general terms (1b)
   (the lack of "faith," "trust," and "knowledge of God")
   B. In specific terms (2b)
   ("oaths are imposed," "and broken," "kill," "rob," "adultery")
   C. In a parallel expansion which may contain a specific historical reference (2c—see p. 25) ("deed of blood")

III. The sentence (in v. 3, moving from a limited sphere to an all-inclusive one)
   A. Against the land ("dried up")
   B. Against the people who inhabit the land ("pine away")
   C. Finally against all the creatures of the land

From this analysis one notes that the sentence is the direct result of the accusation. Thus, the word "therefore" is found at the beginning of v. 3. In v. 1 "for" has the same effect, giving the rationale for the summons to hear. Not only is the pattern of these verses very tight, but also the content is quite comprehensive. Both positive and negative ways of defining the accusation are used, and the

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28. A brief discussion of this form appears in Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 199f. This book is basic for anyone who desires an understanding of the forms used in the prophetic literature. An excellent form critical commentary is Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, cited above, note 7. The most explicit form critical analysis available of Hos. 4 is that of Jared J. Jackson, "Yahweh v. Cohen et al.," *Pittsburgh Perspective*, VII (4, 1966), 28-32. The lawsuit form is described in detail in relation to Dt. 32 by G. E. Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage* (B. W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson, eds.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 26-67. An excellent theological analysis and interpretation of Hosea based on form critical studies is that of Walter Brueggemann, *Tradition for Crisis, A Study in Hosea*, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968). Martin Buss, *The Prophetic Word of Hosea; A Morphological Study* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969) also provides an excellent technical discussion of the rîb-pattern.

far-reaching consequences of the sentence are emphasized by the progressive inclusion in v. 3 of everything inhabiting the land as well as the very land itself.

Hosea 4:1-3 not only fits the "*rîb*-pattern" in terms of its form, but also in terms of the subtleties of its content. Gemser has identified four characteristics of this pattern on the basis of the usage of the term "*rîb*" in legal clauses in the Old Testament (Ex. 23:2, 3, 6; Dt. 7:8; 25:1; Is. 1:17; Job 31:35), and the expansion of this usage by the prophets in which God is seen as an accuser (prosecutor) who presents the evidence and also brings the summons and decides the sentence.[29] In the context of Hosea 4:1-3 these elements include the following:

1) The personal, active nature of God; it is he who brings the charge, one element of which involves a deficiency in Israel's relationship to him: there is "no knowledge of God in the land."
2) An ethical-normative conception of God which presupposes a moral order given and maintained by God: the covenant stipulations of the Decalogue are specifically cited in v. 2 as having been broken.
3) A view of history and the individual in which nothing is neutral; every action has a far reaching effect: involved is the cause and effect relationship between the accusation in vv. 1b and 2 and the sentence in v. 3.
4) An undogmatic and unsystematic way of thinking about religious matters in which God's emotions play a definite role: in addition to positive acts of disobedience, it is the lack of faith, trust and intimate relationship with God which has caused the sentence.

This analysis clarifies several theological elements of Hosea 4:1-3 and relates them to the content of the *rîb*-pattern in general. This illustrates an approach which should be especially helpful to the interpreter as he or she struggles with the development of themes and concepts within any given pericope.

One way of determining whether Hosea 4:1-3 was originally transmitted orally and therefore dates back to Hosea is to analyze its function in the book as a whole. Even the casual reader will

29. B. Gemser, "The Rîb—or Controversy—Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *Wisdom in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplement, Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, eds.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 122-137.

note the contrast between the basically biographical narrative-like material of chapters 1-3 and the more complex poetic form of chapters 4-14. While chapters 1-3 are united by the common theme of Hosea's life, marriage and children, chapters 4-14 do not have such an obvious unity. They are organized around brief, common themes and catchwords.

There is a sense in which 4:1-3 functions as an introduction to at least the rest of chapter 4 and possibly to the whole of chapters 4-14. This position is argued by Good[30] and Jackson.[31] Jackson even goes so far as to see a tight structure to chapter 4 in which vv. 1-3 serve as an introduction to the chapter and vv. 16-19 as its parallel conclusion. The rest of the chapter is divided into four sections which carefully follow the *rib*-pattern. On this basis Good favors the view that vv. 1-3 were not part of the original oral tradition. Rather, he understands them as an originally written introduction provided by the editor of the oral material.

This position is difficult to prove. In the first place, there is a change in the addressees from v. 1 to vv. 4 and 5. In v. 1 the addressees are "Israel" and perhaps "the people of the land" (NEB), while in vv. 4f the addressees are apparently the "priest" and the "prophet" (NEB).[32] One would not expect such a change in addressees if vv. 1-3 were composed by an editor to serve as an introduction for the rest of the chapter. If the unit was originally Hoseanic, the change in addressees could be explained by arguing that it had a different occasion for its initial presentation than vv. 4ff. Furthermore the thematic similarities between vv. 1-3 and the rest of the chapter (vv. 1 and 4, "charge"; vv. 1 and 6, the absence of "knowledge") are of the sort that might be present in a collection of genuine Hoseanic material. While these arguments do not provide certain proof for either position, the weight of probability favors the view that vv. 1-3 are a genuine oracle by Hosea which has been arranged by the editor to serve as an introduction to the rest of chapter 4 and perhaps the rest of the book.[33]

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30. Good, p. 53.

31. Jackson, pp. 28-32.

32. Due to the complexities of the textual difficulties of v. 4 this study will accept the reading of the NEB which is in accord with the decision of Mays, p. 65.

33. Our position with respect to the form and function of vv. 1-3 is supported by Wolff, *Hosea,* pp. 65-69. This position is challenged by Wilhelm Rudolf, "Hosea," *Kommentar zum Alten Testament,* XIII (1966), 95-105.

The life setting and date of the lawsuit form are discussed at some length by Wright.[34] He argues that the theme of this literary form, the lawsuit, developed from the covenant-renewal motif in the North of Israel. It was especially used by the Levitical teachers of the North.[35] Only later (certainly no earlier than the time of Hezekiah) was the form adopted and used in the South. As an adaptation of the covenant-renewal liturgy, the lawsuit does not necessarily have the character of liturgical material (though examples are found, e.g., Dt. 32), but it is frequently found as the address of a particular prophet.

Tradition History

Through form criticism the interpreter has already identified the unit as a "lawsuit."[36] The fact that a lawsuit has been initiated would imply that an agreement has been broken. The legal contract most basic to Israel's self-understanding was the covenant with Yahweh. It is the function of Tradition History to determine the nature of that agreement and the way in which it was employed by Hosea to indict Israel in the 8th century, B.C.

There are five specific transgressions mentioned in v. 2: the swearing of oaths, the breaking of oaths, killing, robbery, and adultery. While the order and wording of these transgressions do not correspond precisely to the prohibitions listed in the Decalogue (Ex. 20 and Dt. 5), it is clear that the indictment is directed against Israel's disregard of specific covenant obligations. More precisely, Israel's transgressions all involve relationships between individuals in the society. These relationships come under the control of the covenant outlined in Ex. 20 and Dt. 5, and when that covenant is broken, so also are these relationships destroyed. Thus, the tradition of covenant prohibitions serves to define the charge which is brought against the people. The interpreter is confronted, then, with a *lawsuit* which goes beyond the description of social decay and a general moral collapse to charge Israel with the deliberate transgression of her covenant agreement.

The Mosaic covenant stipulations not only give authority to the lawsuit, but also define the sentence in v. 3. All but the second of the transgressions mentioned carry with them the sentence of

34. Wright, pp. 58-67.
35. This position is also supported by Wolff as cited by Craghan, p. 89.
36. See above, pp. 26-28.

death.[37] The sentence of v. 3, then, follows directly from the indictment of v. 2 according to the terms of the Mosaic covenant.[38]

This study of Hosea's use of tradition will prove valuable at several points. It enables the interpreter to define the type of oracle being considered (covenant lawsuit) and yields a clearer understanding of Hosea's intention in using this speech form to expose Israel's transgressions of the covenant. Also, the interpreter is enabled to understand the relationship between Hosea's oracles and the tradition which preceded them. The covenant tradition is central to both the judgment and the sentence which they contain. Finally, the continuity between the 8th century community and the preceding generations is emphasized. The covenant, made generations earlier, is still seen by Hosea as the central factor of Israel's life (and in this case, death!).

Content Criticism

There are no specific historical allusions in Hosea 4:1-3 other than the natural calamities hinted at in v. 3 and the veiled indications of internal strife in v. 2. While conjectures may be made, certainty concerning the precise dates of these events is impossible. On the other hand, there are several key words and phrases which are worth examining because of their importance both in the work of Hosea and throughout the Old Testament.

The word "charge" (NEB, v. 1) sets the tone of the passage and even identifies its form. While there are problems with any English rendering of a Hebrew technical term, "charge" conveys the formal legal imagery implicit in the Hebrew *rib*. An equally good translation, as we have seen, is "lawsuit."[39]

In the context of Israel's present history there is no "mutual trust" (v. 1, NEB; Hebrew, "*hesed*"). Other translations include "mercy" (KJV), "steadfast love," "kindness" (RSV), "loyalty" and "devotion." Also contained in the term is the technical concept "covenant loyalty." However, none of these translations sums up all that is meant by the Hebrew term. The context of Hosea 4:1-3 suggests "covenant loyalty" or "mutual trust," since it is the rela-

37. Wolff, *Hosea,* p. 66. Also see the related passages: Ex. 21:17 (swearing oaths); Ex. 21:12 (killing); Ex. 21:16 (robbery); and Lev. 20:10 (adultery).

38. Among the best studies of the Old Testament covenant traditions are those of Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (George A. Buttrick, ed.; New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. I, pp. 714-723; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1972).

39. This translation is adopted by Wolff, *Hosea,* p. 65.

tionship of Israel to God, defined in terms of the covenant, which has been broken. Perhaps the best translation, then, would be a combination of terms "covenant trust."[40]

Another problem is the implications of the phrase "knowledge of God" in v. 1, which serves as the culmination of one of the sets of charges against Israel. "Knowledge of God" seems to summarize both "good faith" and "mutual trust," at least in the opinion of the editors of the NEB.[41]

Many scholars[42] would like to distinguish between "knowledge of God" (4:1; 6:6; 8:2; 13:4) and "knowledge of the Lord" (2:10; 2:22; 6:3; 11:3). It is argued that "knowledge of God" involves knowledge of "traditional Hebrew morality," while "knowledge of the Lord" has to do with religious prohibitions against the invocation of foreign gods. This distinction seems artificial as one reads the texts involved, for there is no evidence that Hosea had anything different in mind when he used one phrase than when he used the other. Mays indicates that "knowledge of God" was bound up with Israel's recital of Yahweh's deeds in her history.[43] It was the failure of the priests to communicate these traditions which is attacked in 4:4ff.

There is more at stake, however, than the recital of Yahweh's role in Israel's history. As indicated in the discussion of tradition history, Hosea 4:2 points to specific covenant obligations which have been broken. These obligations are a part of the "knowledge of God" which is emphasized in v. 1.[44] This combination of the

40. Among studies of the term "hesed" are those of Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1967) and Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 103-107.

41. In the arrangement of the NEB text, "knowledge of God" stands alone in parallel to both "good faith" and "mutual trust." While the arrangement of an English text cannot be definitive for a precise exegesis, for the pastor working only with the English text, its arrangement must be accounted for and taken into consideration. At the very least the interpreter of the English text should notice that there is something significant about the way in which this phrase is emphasized.

42. E.g., J. L. McKenzie, "Knowledge of God in Hosea," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* LXXIV (1955), 27; and Wilhelm Reiss "'Gott nicht Kennen' im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,* LVIII (1941), 78.

43. Mays, p. 63.

44. Hans Walter Wolff, "'Wissen um Gott' bei Hosea als Urform von Theologie," *Evangelische Theologie,* XII (1953), 153ff proposes that awareness of the covenant obligations as the source of Israel's life as a community is the primary meaning of "knowledge of God." This view is challenged by E. Baumann, "'Wissen um Gott' bei Hosea als Urform der Theologie?" *Evangelische Theologie,* XV (1955), 416-425.

historical relationship of God and Israel with the covenant obligations which result from it provides a comprehensive condemnation of Israel's internal life. This leads, in v. 3, to the imposition of an equally comprehensive sentence. The God who punishes Israel is intimately involved in her history from its beginnings to its possible end. Israel ignores both that historical involvement and the obligations which it carries. Thus, the charge of a lack of "knowledge of God" is as devastating a charge as could be brought.

In summary, v. 1b reflects the failure of Israel to maintain her covenantal relations with Yahweh. The specific breaches of the covenant are outlined in v. 2. The dissolution of the covenant thus affects not only the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, but also life within the community itself. The order which God has brought to Israel's life is destroyed, both internally and externally. Vv. 1b and 2 are thus intimately related to each other and find their necessary conclusion in the sentence of v. 3. The central thrust of the text, then, is to announce the far-reaching consequences of Israel's transgression of her covenant relationship to Yahweh. The results of this transgression affect the internal life and relationship of the covenant people. Part III of this series will deal with the transition to a contemporary meaning.

Conversing with the Text

Assumptions and Problems in Interpretation

by David C. Hester

The dialogue with the text continues. By now, the pastor has been introduced to "conversational exegesis" as a concept and methodology for listening to what the ancient author intended to convey to his specific audience in their specific life-situation.[1] Further, the methodology has been demonstrated with respect to Hosea 4:1-3.[2] Still, the conversation is not over. Having heard the text in its ancient setting, the pastor must hear it in his/her life-setting and proclaim it to the world in which he/she lives.

This article is offered as an aid to the dialogical movement from text to sermon. And "sermon" here is understood to mean not just the formal proclamation in the context of worship, but also the multiplicity of ways in which the Church and Synagogue proclaim a biblical text in a contemporary setting. The formal structure of the proclamation will be guided and shaped by the "setting-in-life" of the community to which it is directed and by the intention perceived by the one proclaiming. Nevertheless, the questions raised by the movement from the "then" of the ancient proclamation to the "now" of its present proclamation remain the same. "Conversational exegesis" is critical to biblical interpretation in every situation in which the Tradition is considered fundamental to reflective thinking and acting.[3] Interpretation, then, engages the pastor *daily*, at every point at which he/she listens to the Tradition for a word of God.

It is assumed that the reader has worked his/her way carefully and thoughtfully through the other two "conversations" before

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1. Part I of this series: John Bradley White, "Conversing With the Text: Old Testament Exegesis—A Part of the Pastor's Job Description," *Duke Divinity School Review*, XXXIX (Fall, 1974), 153-80.

2. Part II: R. Michael Casto, "Conversing With the Text: An Application of Conversational Exegesis to Hosea 4:1-3," in this issue of *DDSR*.

3. Cf. White, 160-61, for similar thoughts.

coming to this point. The urgency of this assumption is not a plea for symmetry and logic (three *should* follow one and two), but a conviction that the full context of interpretation includes exegesis. Conversely, exegesis takes place within an interpretive context, since exegetes approach the text with their own "situational baggage" in tow.[4] (The appeal here is to "self-honesty," as John White aptly said, not to textual dishonesty which shuffles the baggage claims, to continue the metaphor, and grabs the past for present or shoves the present into the past.[5]) In a sense, then, interpretation already has begun, since the text is read in contexts, both old and new.

In other words, we take the image of "conversation" seriously, and we assume the active participation by both parties, text and interpreter. The exegete speaks first, as Michael Casto has demonstrated, selecting the text and addressing some preliminary questions to it. These questions are framed in his/her interpretive context but shaped by the exegetical methodology which defines their appropriateness with respect to the text. Next, the text speaks, and the interpreter listens through exegesis. Finally, the exegete speaks, this time as interpreter in the full sense of the word, translating the meaning of the text to the present life-situation. Clearly, the reader who begins with this article is coming in at the "tail end" of the conversation, to use the unglamorous idiom, and is likely to miss the point altogether.

The dynamics of the encounter between interpreter and text as I have briefly described them must determine the shape and boundaries for any discussion of interpretation. If, then, we divide the encounter, speaking at one moment of the text and at another moment of its interpretation, we are doing so for the sake of description only. In reality, the ebb and flow of past and present pervades, and the interpreter already stands with one foot in each world. The pastor must keep in touch with both worlds; his right hand must know what his left is doing, and vice versa.

First, we will point out elements of the "interpretive context," those pre-views which the interpreter brings to the text. Next, we will look at "contextual analogy" as a proposal for relating the two contexts with which the interpreter is engaged. Finally, we will relate the proposal to a specific text, Hosea 4:1-3.

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4. On the "interpretive context," cf. James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church: A Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 51-64.

5. White, 154-63.

The Interpretive Context: What the Interpreter Brings

The pastor, struggling each week to prepare a sermon knows very well that he/she wrestles not only with the self but with the corporate and individual personalities and lives of a congregation. As the sermon develops, certain faces and happenings in the congregation come quite literally into view. This common phenomenon may help the sermon to make contact and take hold on matters of important, even urgent, need. The aim is not that the preacher may receive a verbal pat on the back (head?) from a parishioner who "couldn't agree more" (a phrase which itself begs exegesis!) or who may affirm, "You were certainly speaking to me today." The aim is rather that the sermon may receive a hearing precisely because it is audible in the context of a congregation's life. It is a basic homiletic rule that a sermon written and delivered unmindful of the congregation's context for hearing never gets off the pulpit (And the fact remains true even if the pulpit moves down among the pews!). We hear in context, and we speak in context. And knowing the constituent elements of the contexts in which we hear and speak is essential if communication is to happen, "communication" here taken to mean that what is heard is what was intended to be heard.

This basic fact of communication extends as well to the interpreter as the text is considered. Indeed, it is upon this rock that the project of hermeneutics, the project of understanding and interpreting the text, may flounder if the course is not charted carefully. A part of the course is charted by the historical-critical method of exegesis, the aim of which is to define the context of the biblical text. But the hermeneutical journey to understanding may not be made until another chart is graphed, one which shows the outlines of the interpreter's context. To push the image a bit further still, the interpreter's chart will not show where he/she is going but where he/she has been. The interpreter is like a navigating explorer. He/she must chart a course for the unknown, having at hand only the best charts of past experience, the experience attested by the biblical text and his/her own experience for guidance. The chart for the future must wait upon the exploration at hand. The need to study the available charts is clearly urgent, then, and the wise navigator will not leave port *before* he/she has studied them carefully and thoroughly.

What I am urging, in addition to text-critical analysis, is self-criticism to determine the context in which the pastor first reads

and hears the text. It is by now axiomatic that one does not come to a text completely shed of presuppositions, though "presuppositions" may be too philosophically pungent, generally, to describe what is brought. James Barr's point is well taken: presupposition suggests a commitment to a carefully worked out system, philosophical or theological, which delimits critically the reading of a text.[6] Such presuppositional systems, of course, do exist, and thus the interpreter may be deafened to the text. What most of us bring to the text are more like pre-views than presuppositions. That is, we have in mind, or perhaps not yet in mind, a partially and provisionally articulated view of God and humankind and the world in which we live. Not only this; we bring the values of our parents, educators, and social "neighborhood" from which we have come. We hear the text as capitalists, as Americans, as Protestants, who live in the country, in the city, or in the suburbs. And we expect to see our values reflected in the text. In addition, we have a general familiarity with the Bible and the biblical world and perhaps even a particular familiarity with the book in which we find our text or even the text itself (we've read it before, had a course on Hosea in seminary, or heard a sermon preached on it or saw it in the church school curriculum). Our approach to the text, then, is not without context; it is not as if we came from nowhere to something of which we have no knowledge. Barr's advice is worth taking again: in reality, our stance toward the text is more a reappraisal than an approach as if we had never been here before.[7]

That pre-views exist as the interpreter's context does not short-circuit the urgency for critical exegesis. Faithfulness to the biblical witness demands that the interpreter articulate such pre-views as carefully as possible. The claim to lay them aside is a false claim and a futile effort. The imperative is to make what is unconscious, conscious, to speak the unspoken assumptions, and to rehearse one's past experience. Having done so, these pre-views may be held in tension, and hence in check, as the interpreter listens to the biblical witness in its context. Only by this hearing-in-tension can the differences *and* similarities in human experience which constitute the two contexts of the interpreter become apparent.

I offer two possible foci for asking and responding to the self-analysis questions: theological pre-views and sociological pre-views.

6. Cf. James Barr, *Old and New In Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 176-92. Barr's careful description of the debilitating effects of the purist's arguments against "pre-suppositions" is worth reading, especially for the pastor/exegete exiled by the apparent relativity of his effort to interpret the Bible.

7. *Ibid.*, 185-6.

Doubtless there are other categories equally useful, but these two foci allow a full orchestration of questions.

By "theological" I mean specific questions concerning one's pre-views of God, the community of faith, the Bible, and the interrelationship of these three parts. Anyone with a taste of systematic theology will recognize immediately that these three general categories can be divided again and again and, like the loaves and fish, still have left-overs. I am not trying to be comprehensive but suggestive.

By "sociological" I mean specific questions concerning one's pre-views of the world in which one lives: who am I in my world, what kind of world is it, and why does it look *this* way to me? In part, these are newspaper and television, frontroom and bedroom, hospital and market place questions. Of course, theology will impose itself here, too; but it will be important to think about what others in your world see and say: the non-theologians, the *saecular* view, if you will. The obvious may be half-forgotten in the pastor's concentration: world-views, views of reality abound beside those of our theologies, yet they are part of our context and must not be excluded.

A Pre-View of the Scriptures

Though space will not permit anything like a complete description of the interpretive context from which this essay is being written, something must be said about the pre-view of the Bible which has shaped the interpretation of Hosea 4:1-3 offered below. The statement which follows is not so much confessional as it is historical in character, arising from the efforts of historical-critical investigation of the biblical texts. James Smart and other biblical scholars have pointed to the widening gap between biblical scholarship and the church, which discloses general abandonment of seminary-learned critical investigation.[8] A fundamental aim of this series of articles is to quicken that seminary-fired flame once more, so that the best biblical scholarship may be the point of departure for efforts to proclaim a word of God for the moment.

Recent investigation in canonical criticism and comparative midrash has focused attention on the use made of the Tradition by the community of faith. Canonical criticism asks questions con-

8. Smart, *Ibid.*, 15-27, 117-29. This book is highly recommended for the pastor's careful study. The hermeneutical issues raised are not resolved, but that is not Smart's intent. Rather, he raises important questions and places them in close perspective, a perspective both careful and useful. Cf. also White, 157-63, for a discussion of the "crisis in exegesis."

cerning the present shape and extent of the canon. Since the Bible has not preserved all of the traditions available to the community, canonical criticism asks why *these* traditions and not others have been preserved, why were *they* authoritative for the community, and how did they *function* authoritatively.[9] Comparative midrash, on the other hand, is concerned with the use of tradition after the concept of canon arose. If canonical criticism is concerned with the *formation* of the canon, comparative midrash is concerned with the *use* of the canon.[10]

The questions posed by comparative midrash and canonical criticism are vital to our discussion because they are questions of hermeneutics, questions concerning the meaning of the tradition for a community of faith and the means by which interpretation was achieved. These problems of interpretation and the response of the biblical writers to them provide a critical point of contact with our hermeneutical concerns. That point of contact rests upon an attitude—a theological conviction, if you will—which regarded the traditions as dynamic and adaptable to the needs of successive generations. This conviction of adaptability Sanders calls "the primary characteristic" of the canonical story:

> Israel's canon was basically a story adaptable to a number of different literary forms, adaptable to the varying fortunes of the people who found their identity in it, adaptable to the needs of peace or the strains of war, adaptable to widely scattered communities themselves adjusting to new or

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9. James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), xiii-xx. Sanders' introduction provides a helpful definition of each of the subdisciplines of biblical criticism; the whole book is a demonstration of canonical criticism. Further help is provided by two articles by Sanders: "Adaptable for Life: The Nature and Function of Canon," in the forthcoming G. Ernest Wright Festschrift and "The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable," in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics: J. Philip Hyatt, In Memoriam,* eds. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1974), 247-60. For a proposed hermeneutic in "canonical context," see Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 91-148.

10. Sanders, *Torah and Canon,* 15. For a discussion of midrash and midrashic exegesis, cf. G. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis," *The Cambridge History of the Bible,* eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), I, 199-231. Further, a useful introduction to the problems of comparative midrash may be found in a review of Father Addison Wright's *The Literary Genre Midrash* by Roger LeDeaut, "Apropos A Definition of Midrash," trans. Mary Howard Calloway, *Interpretation* XXV (July, 1971), 259-82.

strange idioms of existence, but retaining a transnational identity, and adaptable to a sedentary or migratory life.[11]

The use of the exodus tradition at various stages in Israel's history provides an example. In the early monarchical period, the story of the deliverance from Egypt provided the framework in which Israel understood herself as an elected people and established her identity in juxtaposition with her neighbors (Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 7:6-8). The memory gave form and substance to a people seeking national identity. Furthermore, in the deliverance from Egypt, Israel saw a guarantee for the future, the absolute surety of God's perpetual favor. And the prosperity of the kingdom under David and Solomon seemed to confirm this view. Yet the tradition is adaptable to judgment *against* the nation in a different time. Amos uses the memory of deliverance and election as prophetic criticism against the national pride and arrogance which claimed to have a binding hold on the Deliverer (Amos 2:9-11; 3:1-2). The story which was a source of national stability and pride for one generation became a promise of destruction to another. Both salvation and judgment are inherent in the exodus tradition, since salvation demands appropriate response. This dynamic quality within the tradition permits—even demands—adaptation and contemporizing to the identity questions of each generation.

What has been said concerning the adaptability of traditions is not limitable to the Old Testament. Clearly the New Testament was shaped by adaptation of traditions to meet the needs of the primitive Christian community. Nor was the adaptability of traditions witnessed by the New Testament limited to the use of the Old Testament in the New. Traditions arising in the Christian community (words of Jesus and stories about Jesus, for example) were adapted to new purposes by the Gospel writers and in response to a particular community's search for identity and life-style in the face of crises.[12] Charles E. Carlston recently wrote of the author of the Gospel of Matthew, for example:

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11. Sanders, "Adaptable for Life." For a brilliant example of tradition criticism's contribution to the discussion concerning the hermeneutics of J, E, and P, see Terrence E. Fretheim, "The Jacob Traditions: Theology and Hermeneutic," *Interpretation* XXVI (October 1972), 419-436.

12. Cf. Sanders, "The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable." On the use of the Old Testament in the new, see Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (cited in note 9 above) and Dwight Moody Smith, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring*, ed. James M. Efird (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1972), 3-65. Very helpful also is Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (cited fully, n. 6 above), esp. 149-70.

> Matthew should be read as a *traditor,* one who passes along his tradition; as a theologian, one who thinks about what he is doing; and as a churchman, one who knows that a larger circle than his immediate friends will be influenced by his acts.

He adds, notably, "To the extent that we can discern his intention and follow him in it, we are performing the same tasks."[13]

Matthew's addition of one parable (the wedding garment) in 22:11-14 to another parable (the marriage feast, 22:2-10) is a case in point. That this is Matthew's addition is clear from the parallel to the marriage feast parable in Luke 14:16-24. The point of this parable is generally the same in both Matthew and Luke, though they differ in significant particulars. The point is that the elect are not those whom the community considers *obviously* elect. The application of the parable *in the gospel setting* is against the Christian community's misunderstanding of election. But Matthew amends the point with the parable of the wedding garment. The thrust of his addition is to qualify the reversal of the definition of "the elect" given in the marriage feast parable. The elect include those not obviously worthy, but, according to Matthew, appropriate conduct (the thrust of the wedding garment parable) is still demanded. This qualifying point is driven home by the closing verse: "For many are called (klētoi) but few are chosen (eklektoi)." This point is very much in keeping with Matthew's emphasis throughout the Gospel on right behavior, which is an important emphasis for Jewish-Christians in search of identity within the new community.

The insights gained from canonical criticism may help us bridge the gap between historical criticism and application of exegetical insights to the contemporary setting. The exegete must focus on hermeneutical issues: Why was *this* tradition used and not another? How was the tradition being adapted to a present need? What was being said in its present context and how was it heard? The emphasis of these questions is on *purpose* and *function* rather than content; they are questions of meaning in changing life-situations. And they are *types* of questions which the contemporary interpreter must ask: Why was this passage chosen for a sermon and not another? How is the tradition adaptable to a present need within the boundaries set by exegesis? What is the tradition saying? How will it be heard, and who must hear it now?

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13. Charles E. Carlston, "Interpreting the Gospel of Matthew," *Interpretation* XXIX (January 1975), 3-12. This article is an excellent demonstration of comparative reading in the synoptics.

The issue at stake is scriptural vitality, the continuing ability of the traditions to give and shape communal and individual life. The traditions are not dead weight, an ancient burden to be borne reverently, but with some embarrassment, on the back of a church which aches to become "contemporary." Yet either the uncritical use of the Bible, or the abandonment of the traditions altogether, both of which characterize much current preaching and church school curricula, proclaims a different view. If God is not dead, the traditions which witness to his dialogue in covenant with humankind lie comatose. The Bible continues to be read and expounded, but the vitality which enabled the community to respond to issues of identity and existence is missing. Vitality is not restored by a verbal oil change which substitutes, for example, the jargon of psychology for biblical language, inserting "hang-up" where "sin" is read and "whole being" for "salvation." Nor is vitality restored by forcing twentieth-century minds into first-century and earlier molds and transporting a congregation, even for an hour, from Durham to the banks of the river Jabbok. These maneuvers belie the claim that God is alive and has something to say which we have not heard, and, further, they silence the traditions through which the community of faith may see and hear a word of God.

But some may object that I have posed the wrong problem. It is not that we have silenced the scriptures but that the scriptures are, in fact, silent with respect to contemporary issues and human needs. The gap between *then* and *now* is an abyss, and we are left on the other side, able only to look back appreciatively but, in reality, left quite alone to find a way into the future. The Bible, so this view continues, is an historical heirloom, bequeathed to a community of faith by those whose reality was different than our own. We may respect, even revere, our heritage, but it is no motivating force for our present.

The view I have sketched is admittedly extreme. Yet it is operative, consciously or unconsciously, in the current quest for "relevant" preaching and teaching which takes Sartre, *Time Magazine* or "Peanuts" as a text. This view is also discernible in attempts to separate the traditions of the Old Testament from those of the New Testament. At the extreme, one may recall church historian Adolph von Harnack's concluding comment to his work on Marcion:

> To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the Church rightly repudiated; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a

> fate which the Reformation could not yet avoid; but to continue to keep it in Protestantism as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is the consequence of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis. To sweep the table clean . . . is the action required of Protestantism today. . . . And it is almost too late.[14]

Parenthetically, it may be noted that von Harnack's imperative has been achieved, practically, if one may judge from the silence of Old Testament preaching.

Less extreme, but equally effective, is Rudolph Bultmann's view. For Bultmann, the Old Testament is historically important and even theologically important as "instruction" or "preparation" for the New Testament revelation; but for the Christian, "the Old Testament is no longer revelation as it has been, and still is, for the Jews."[15] Or, again, ". . . to us the history of Israel is not history of revelation. The events which meant something for Israel, which were God's Word, mean nothing more to us."[16] Only the Old Testament *as law* justifies its position in the church canon:

> Thus the Old Testament is the presupposition of the New. Not in the sense of a *historical* (*historisch*) view, as though the historical phenomenon of the Christian religion had become possible only on the basis of the evolving history of religion attested by the Old Testament; but rather in the *material* (*sachlich*) sense that man must stand under the Old Testament if he wants to understand the New. The *material connection between Law and Gospel* means that the Gospel can be preached only when man stands under the Law. (Italics Bultmann's)[17]

Quite logically, Bultmann concludes:

> *But this Law, which is embodied in the Old Testament, by no means needs to be the concrete Old Testament.* The pre-understanding (Vorverständnis) of the Gospel which emerges under the Old Testament can emerge just as well within other historical embodiments of the divine Law. (Italics Bultmann's)[18]

The key issue concerns revelation. If revelation may be taken to mean, at least, God's continuing dialogue with humankind, to

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14. Adolph von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott, line Monographic zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche. Neue Studien zu Marcion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960). Quoted in James Barr, "The Old Testament and the New Crisis of Biblical Authority," *Interpretation* XXV (January 1971), 34-35.

15. Rudolph Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," *The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 31.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 15.

18. Bultmann, 17.

which the traditions witness, then Bultmann's claim effectively silences the Old Testament by dubbing it "no revelation." Instead of revelation, the Old Testament becomes wholly pedagogical and wholly "other" with respect to the New Testament.

Such a double standard or others like it which would subdivide the canon on christocentric grounds is intolerable. No one would deny that the lines between the testaments are both continuous and discontinuous. And it is demonstrably apparent that the lines of continuity extend beyond the quotations of the Old Testament in the New to the God of Israel who is also the God and father of Jesus Christ. The word God speaks in the New Testament is new, indeed; yet, its creative, liberating purpose resounds already in the Old Testament. James Barr's comment is to the point: though Christian faith may say that the sending of Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's purpose, Jesus Christ does not become the criterion for the meaningfulness of that which is done by God before he is sent.[19] The word God speaks to Israel is a real word for salvation and cannot be made less real by calling it "preparatory." God is known in Israel, and what is revealed in the New Testament is not an unknown God but a different word in continuing pursuit of a creating, saving, liberating relationship. The growth of the traditions is, to borrow another phrase from Barr, "soteriologically functional," providing the matrix for the coming divine acts as well as the impulse for their very occurrence.[20] The traditions, then, are a variegated whole, and the authority of any one or all of them resides in their ability to convey a word by which the community to which they are entrusted may be shaped and guided. Some may speak more loudly at one time than another, since differing needs for identity will formulate different questions to be put to the traditions. Therefore no part of the tradition may be discounted or cut off.

It should be said that whatever arguments may be raised concerning the historical specificity or relativity of Old Testament tradition must, in honesty, be raised against the New Testament as well. The shape of the New Testament was no less subject to the accidents of its own time than the Old. The interpreter's problem in moving from *then* to *now* is the same, whether the text being studied is from the New Testament or the Old. Ultimately, if the Old Testament traditions cannot transcend their time, neither can those of the New.

19. Barr, *Old and New*, 153.
20. *Ibid.*, 156.

Contextual Analogy: A Proposal

It should be clear by now that any methodology for interpretation of the biblical text must (1) take seriously the results of the historical-critical exegesis, (2) acknowledge the interpreter's life-situation, and (3) affirm and be subject to the demand for life of the canonical story. These imperatives describe the function and purpose to which the pastor as interpreter is committed: to transmit and translate accurately a word from God to the human situation. It is God who is listened to, who demands, challenges, and promises fearfully, "I will be with you!" through the texts. Therefore, the interpreter and the community to whom the word heard in the texts is directed are subject to that word. This is to say that interpretation has the character of an encounter in which the word which is heard lays claim to those who hear it and demands response.

The basic affirmation of faith, that God continues to be in dialogue with humankind and that his word is mediated through, though not bound by, the whole canonical story which witnesses to his speaking, leads to the problem of transition. We may put the question directly: What point of contact do we have with the ancient witnesses that enables us to translate and transmit a word first directed to and heard by them? Put differently, how does the canonical story become *our* story and hence authoritative, responding to our existential questions concerning who we are and what we are to do in the situation in which we find ourselves?

It seems to me that the movement of interpretation is more accurately described as a movement from one context to another context than from one time to another time. The categories, obviously, are not mutually exclusive: context includes time, and time, in part, defines context. The point I wish to make is one of emphasis and focus. Attention to context may permit us to see more clearly the differences and similarities of the human condition to which a word of God was and is addressed. The point of contact for translation, I believe, must be found in the human response to the questioning of existence, personal and communal, by which we seek identity. Every generation paraphrases the Elders' question to the Prophet Ezekiel when news of the destruction of Jerusalem reached Babylon: "How shall we live?" in this community and under these circumstances. In this question, and in the response made to it, we make contact with the ancient traditions. The circumstances which give a particular shape to the

questioning and response differ from generation to generation, and the interpreter must take these differences seriously. These are trappings for a moment and cover the dialogue of God with humankind in every age. The historical circumstances and the language used to describe them cannot be disregarded, because only an understanding of them will allow them to be stripped away to lay bare the essential dialogue which must be translated. The hermeneutical question I have been describing, Lawrence E. Toombs sums up in this question: "To what facet of the human condition was the passage originally directed, and what was it saying to that situation in its own terms and in its own time?"[21]

Having established a point of contact with the text, we must look now at the context in which the essential dialogue described by the ancient author will be heard anew. The second hermeneutical imperative should come to mind: the preservation of the integrity of the interpreter's life-situation. The methodological question is: How may a translation be made which will preserve the essential dialogue of the text and be cognizant of the very real differences of the new setting? If the exegetical task was to remove the ancient historical and linguistic trappings which draped the essential dialogue, the interpreter's job, at this point, is to reclothe it. The exegetical questions become hermeneutical questions; the exegete asked to whom the passage was directed, to what purpose, and in what setting-in-life. The interpreter now asks, to whom IS the word directed, to what purpose, and in what contemporary setting-in-life. Again, Toombs' hermeneutical question is a summary: "In what contemporary forms does the human situation to which this passage speaks manifest itself?"[22]

The preacher must be cautious. The differences between the ancient context and a contemporary context are real. Contextual analogy IS analogy and no more than that. We are not looking for one-to-one correspondence between the ancient setting and our own; that would amount to a simplistic denial of any difference. Analogy recognizes that things have changed; it does not deny reality differences. We seek, rather, comparability in the identity questioning to which the text was addressed—Who are we? What

21. Lawrence E. Toombs, "The Problematic of Preaching from the Old Testament," *Interpretation* XXIII (July 1969), 304. The title of this very helpful article is somewhat misleading, since Toombs' insights are germane to preaching from either testament.

22. *Ibid.*

are we to do as people of the covenant? Who/what is God—through which the canonical story may be contemporized.[23]

Comparability may be sought along the broad horizon of contemporary human experience. Direction may be given for the search, however, by considering first to whom the passage is directed. The ancient situation sets the boundaries: To whom was the message delivered? The hermeneutical question then follows: What community or part of a community is comparable to the ancient audience? If the ancient audience was the covenant community, whether Israel, the disciples, or the Christian congregations, the comparable contemporary community for the Christian pastor is the church, the covenant community of which he/she is a part. This point is vital, especially with respect to Old Testament interpretation. The sense of election, of being a people summoned into covenant relationship with God with the accompanying responsibilities that relationship demands, pervades the traditions of both testaments. It is a focal point of that continuity and discontinuity which links Old and New. What is "new" in the new covenant in Jesus Christ needs carefully to be explored. Central to that task is Romans 9-11 which interlaces the destiny of Jew and Gentile. The argument in Romans is brought to a head in the passage in Ephesians in which Jew and Gentile are made into one body and thus bring reconciliation to all. The Old Testament traditions which address the covenant people, frequently with severe criticism, belong in the church as well as the synagogue, and the focus of the criticism may be directed against the church, as well as the synagogue.

The search for contextual analogy, then, is carried on from within the covenant context, which is itself a contextual analogy. The search may be narrowed further by asking a second exegetical question: To what purpose did the ancient author speak, or what did he wish them to do in response? Did he mean for his audience to be comforted or perhaps challenged? Was his message, to borrow from James Sanders, a "prophetic critique," a challenge to "in-group" thinking or acting?[24] This ability to use the traditions as "witnesses against ourselves," to use Joshua's words, is frequently neglected by Christian interpretation. We tend to identify with the "good guys" or those whom we presume to be "good guys" at least. But we may do so only at the peril of blurring and confusing the

23. Cf. Sanders, *Torah and Canon,* xiv-xv.

24. Sanders, "The Ethic of Election in Luke's Great Banquet Parable," 250, 253.

appropriate contextual analogy. Lloyd Bailey's hermeneutical warning is noteworthy:

> This appears to me to be a basic rule of interpretation: When the text is read in such a way that the *status quo* is supported, when one is inclined to identify with those in the text perceived as 'the good guys,' then one likely has misunderstood the intent of the text. Has this not implications for the Christian attitude toward the Old Testament? Do we find the interim otherworldliness of the New Testament authoritative in part because it enables us to escape the social demands of the Old Testament?[25]

Again, the hermeneutical questions respond to the labors of exegesis. What is the contemporary form of that human condition (within the covenant context) which is challenged or comforted by the tradition? What is the contemporary response comparable to that called for by the text? Again, the intention is not to duplicate the response called for by the text, but to find an appropriate contextual analogy for it. The analogy is not static; it compares different contexts and assumes that God may do "a new thing," as Second Isaiah announced. Yet the analogy must also assume, based on the witness of the traditions, that the new will be of the creating and liberating character of the old. Thus, the community may say, in one breath, "Behold, the former things have come to pass and new things I now declare" (Is. 42:9).

Hosea 4:1-3

In closing, may I offer a few remarks regarding the text from Hosea which has been exegeted by Michael Casto.

The exegesis has shown us, in the first instance, that to have preached along the lines suggested by an initial hearing could have resulted in a sermon unfaithful to the text. Such false starts are not uncommon, especially if one is "keeping the night watch" before Sunday morning. The sermon might have decried the vices mentioned in vs. 2, vices which indeed make headlines on the nightly news. And, for the Prophet's "O people of Israel" (vs. 1), the congregation would have heard, "O people of America (except for those of us gathered in this sanctuary)," and would have agreed that the land does mourn under the burden of such worthless scoundrels.

But such a sermon, as we have learned, would have pointed the gun in the wrong direction. God's contention, his lawsuit (RSV "controversy"), is with Israel not as a political body (and hence

25. Lloyd Bailey, "From Text to Sermon: Reflections on Recent Discussions," *Concilium*, 1975 (forthcoming).

the analogy with America crumbles) but as a covenant people. The covenantal language of vs. 1b ("faithfulness," "kindness," and the summary "knowledge of God") and the implicit reference to the Decalogue in the catalog of crimes in vs. 2 make this clear. The contextual analogy for God's trial of his people must be found among those who today claim the covenant relationship: the church. Hosea's announcement, rightly heard, is a prophetic critique against *us*!

The exegesis has shown us also that we will miss the point if we focus our attention on the crimes enumerated in verse two. Though they would seem to be the most specific handle which we could grab homiletically, we have learned that they do not constitute the main thrust of the text. Casto reminds us:

> The central thrust of the text, then, is to announce the far-reaching consequences of Israel's trangression of her covenant relationship to Yahweh. The results of this transgression affect the internal life and relationship of the covenant people.[26]

The crimes are only specific counts in the indictment. The indictment, however, accuses Israel, and by contextual analogy us, of having totally rejected God and the covenant relationship. The crimes are offered as demonstrable evidence, prosecution exhibits, in the indictment. It has been pointed out that the crimes are acts against other members of the larger community and in violation of normative life under the covenant. If, in the course of the sermon, we wish to offer corroborative evidence to the central indictment, we shall have to determine first the forms which normative life in the covenant take for us. The "evidence" may be specifically presented, then, in terms related to the human situation of *our* context.

A third point drawn from the exegesis is likewise instructive. The broken relationship with God tears the very fabric of creation (vs. 3). The covenant relationship with God is a constituent of the created order, and the severance of that relationship totters creation toward chaos (Cf. Is. 24:1; Jer. 4:19ff., where the "without form and void" of Gen. 1:2 is attested; Rom. 8:20ff.; and the apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the "evil age" in Mk. 13, Matt. 24, and Lk. 21:5-36). This point could find its contextual analogy in our present struggle to understand ourselves as a part of the created order, insisting as it does that humankind is part of the ecos and that our treatment of each other has ecological ramifications.

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26. Casto, *supra* p. 33.

Undoubtedly, more can be said. But perhaps these three points are sufficient to demonstrate the methodology and perhaps to spur a sermon on its way. It seems appropriate to close with a final comment regarding the third hermeneutical imperative: interpretation must affirm and be subject to the demand for life of the canonical story. This I take to be the purpose to which the minister, as preacher, teacher, and pastor, is called and invited. In whichever capacity he/she is ministering at the moment, his/her responsibility and privilege as interpreter leads him/her to challenge and be challenged, to grasp and to be grasped, to knock and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to find a door opening to a word of God. "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

Focus On Faculty

E. C. Shoaf: *Director of Field Education*

My journey begins before I was born, when German immigrants settled in the Yadkin River Valley to carve out a new society. Their dogged individualism and simple piety helped them construct a society on the frontier marked by hard work, determination and elemental faith. These fundamental traits were woven into me from my beginning.

The rise of the furniture industry brought my parents to High Point, N. C., which formed the context of my life through high school and the undergraduate program at High Point College.

As with most, my spiritual and character formation drew deeply from my contributors and experiences. My father, who did not complete high school but was rich with the wisdom of experience, insisted on work, frugality by saving and not spending, fair play, equal treatment and justice for all. My mother savored ideas, reading, language, religion and music. They were churchmen and built most of their non-working life around the activities and relationships of the congregation. I was truly reared on the "front pew." We lived three houses from the church and, because my mother was playing the organ for some service, wedding, funeral or leading some other activity, I spent as much time at church as at home. Participation in the Boy Scout Troop, Sunday School, Youth Fellowship and helping fire the furnace gave a sense of belonging and ownership that no doubt have spilled over into my pastoral life. I was influenced deeply by this community of faith and especially by the genuine spirit of those adults who gave time and attention to me.

Adolescent struggles hit me hard. My church was fundamentalist in Biblical and theological views. In high school I discovered science! A new world dawned, and with it the questions. I challenged the Church—it was intertwined with my parents—and after high school left home for a year of work in construction trades. A year of experimenting with life outside the church brought more questions and the fundamental insight that I needed the Grace and Power of God to construct a meaningful life. Reconstruction began with the decision to enter college and shortly thereafter the decision for Christ's ministry.

In college the spiritual struggle continued. A double major in English Literature and Psychology indicates the bipolar interaction of my mind. Is the meaning of human life most accurately portrayed by science or the mystery and poetry of literature? I opted for science and fought my ideological way through Divinity School and ten years of ministry before accepting its limitation for ultimate redemption. At that point the influence of my home church and the basic formation of my theological courses arose to inform and characterize a new faith and practice in ministry.

The ministry has provided me an opportunity for a variety of services. I was a student pastor while in the Divinity School and subsequently served parish churches in Lillington, Fayetteville, Fremont and Edenton in the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. At intervals I served as Minister of Education in Duke Memorial Church in Durham and Edenton Street Church in Raleigh. In this period I did extensive graduate work in Education at UNC, Chapel Hill. While serving the Edenton Church I taught part-time for four years at the College of The Albemarle in Elizabeth City, a mission ministry to Tidewater people. My recent assignment in the Divinity School has enlarged this ministry to students and provides a more basic ministry to the future leaders of Christ's Church.

My spiritual journey has taken succor from many, but the most enduring have come from lay persons who have shared a genuine and abiding faith with me. Their fresh revelation of God's presence and direction have inspired and sustained and keep me still!

* * *

Robert C. Gregg: *Assistant Professor of Patristics and Medieval Church History*

Judging from the frequency with which you and I emerge as the heroes of our own tales, it is evident that no life-story is ever quite so enthralling as our own. But if that's true, why is the task of composing an autobiographical sketch so odious and painful? Perhaps it's because we must do openly and baldly what we've invested years learning to do with ingenious subtlety. Or is it that there's something unsatisfactory in the genre of "personal history" or *vita* itself, conspiring to summon from you the prosaic details

(schools, degrees, jobs, etc.*) of a life you are convinced has seen some poetry?

I can scarcely remember the name of my elementary school in Houston, but I have indelible recollection of the eyes of my friend "Tubby" when I saw him the day his mother died. It's hard for me to recover the name of a certain high-school teacher of English. I do not forget the mysterious disappearance of the bi-focal line through her eyes when the muse overwhelmed her. When the inhibiting invitation comes—"Tell us about yourself!"—it's curious that the people with memorable eyes come forth so reluctantly from the chambers of the past. I suspect there are good and gentle reasons for that.

Someday I shall seize upon such an invitation as this one and run through my myth in language from the world of late antiquity, noting my generation from deep Silence, and recounting how, when my soul wearied of adoring the Good, I plummeted into materiality and cooled into flesh around the year 1938. But not today.

When I try to sort out what I've been doing in the spent part of my life, I sense that the deeds and misdeeds render public and private readings. Publicly, mine is a fairly undramatic history—not a great deal to arouse prurient interest, and virtually nothing to inspire hagiography. But it is known to *me* just how much passion was involved in some events which barely register in a *résumé*: notably, the discovery and winning of (or was it surrender?) the person who continues to make a believer out of me, or the strange and serpentine journey to a vocation that brings genuine pleasure. I would like to believe, and on most days do, that much of my life has been spent investigating and living through variations on what Clement of Alexandria called the queries of the gnostic: "who we were, and what we have become, where we were, where we were placed, whither we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is, what rebirth." In the resolution of those questions I am able to report only the most provisional advances.

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*[Editor's Note: University of the South (Sewanee), B.A. in English literature; Episcopal Theological School, M.Div., 1963; University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. in Patristics, 1974; chaplain and teacher at St. George's School, Newport, R. I., 1963-67; assistant professor of New Testament Literature and Languages, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1971-74; dissertation, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories,* to be published this summer; current research in the soteriology and politics of the Arian dispute.]

Recently, a regional newspaper billed my appearance as a speaker with a string of superlatives which, though a touch effusive, struck me as not being totally unreasonable. The howls and catcalls which emanated from my wife and children were, to say the least, sobering. In retaliation I challenged my offspring to explain, if the media had been so wide of the mark, what in fact makes their father tick. Their responses were, if I remember correctly, "wisdom," "idiocracy" (*sic*—I'm hoping he was playfully seeking a term akin to "idiocy"), and "Mom." There resides enough pure verity in those offerings to keep me busy for a while, and to make me think twice before I ask such a thing again.

Book Reviews

MINISTRY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Unvanquished Puritan: A Portrait of Lyman Beecher. Stuart C. Henry. Eerdmans. 1973. 299 pp. $7.95.

Lyman Beecher's life spanned years of tremendous change in America. Born in the midst of the revolutionary period, Beecher spent the bulk of his ministry dealing with social and intellectual issues of the early nineteenth century; toward the end, his career floundered on the issues which ultimately divided the nation in the dark days of the civil war.

Beecher's Puritan credentials were eminently respectable. Born in New Haven, he grew up in Guilford, Connecticut, and was graduated from Yale College in 1797. He began his career at Yale during the last years of the presidency of the insatiably curious and unfailingly benign Ezra Stiles, but he soon came under the influence of the vigorous new president, Timothy Dwight, recently come from the parish of Greenfield Hill. Dwight came to Yale determined to stem the tide of infidelity and immediately set out to convert the student body to the staunch New England Puritan faith of the fathers. Beecher was converted and remained at Yale for nine months after graduation to study theology with the fiery Dwight.

In 1799 Beecher was called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church of East Hampton, Long Island. There he remained until 1810, when he moved his growing family to Litchfield, Connecticut, a center of culture and education. In these years Beecher continued and deepened his intimate friendship with Nathaniel William Taylor, influential preacher and professor of theology at Yale. Taylor sought to apply Calvinism to early nineteenth-century America and interpret the faith in such a way that it would at once accommodate both continuity and change. In fact, by allowing man a role in his salvation, Taylor modified Calvinism to such an extent that, claims to the contrary aside, the conservatives were right to see that the heart of the message was irreparably altered.

Beecher tirelessly traversed New England proclaiming the need and possibility for man to be saved, and he became the principal spokesman for fidelity to the ancient faith. It was no wonder, then, that Boston, besieged with rapid growth of Unitarianism, called Beecher to the center of infidelity. In 1826 Beecher left Litchfield and moved the headquarters of his battle for orthodoxy to Hanover Street Church in Boston.

A Plea for the West, Beecher's famous book in which he stressed the importance of Christianizing the West, was published in 1832 and contributed immensely to his stature as a national figure. He soon left Boston to accept the presidency of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, a fledgling institution founded to prepare ministers and missionaries for the American frontier. Lane's existence was intended to guarantee that national expansion would be undergirded by Puritanism rather than infidelity or, worse, Catholicism.

Unfortunately for Beecher, the primary battle on the frontier in the 1830's and 40's turned out to be over means of dealing with slavery rather than over the nature of faith. Lane students, under the leadership of one of their number, Theodore Weld, became avid abolitionists. Residents of Cincinnati, and the trustees of the seminary, were horrified at the speech and actions of the students. Beecher failed to grasp the realities and complexities of the situation

and lost control. In the process he also lost his students who, except for a very few, moved in mass to Oberlin, where they were given free rein. In 1850 Beecher left the presidency of Lane and returned to the East, where he lived quietly among his children until his death in 1863.

Beecher was husband to three wives and father to eleven children, among whom are counted some of the most notable Americans of the nineteenth century. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote numerous novels, one of which was the international best-seller, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Catherine Beecher was a pioneer in women's education; she established schools and wrote eighteen major works on subjects ranging from home economics to theology. Henry Ward Beecher, for forty years world-famous pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, was an enormously popular preacher.

Lyman Beecher, America's most celebrated early nineteenth-century Puritan preacher, sought to guarantee that the future of America would be worthy of its past; he recognized that the character of the nation would be determined on the western frontier. To the end of his life, he remained convinced that America's well-being depended on the willingness of her citizens to hear and accept the call to order life after the fashion of God's directive as defined by traditional Puritanism.

The thesis of Stuart Henry's book is that Beecher "was a living illustration of an evolving optimistic anthropology in American religion." (p. 9) American Christian thought moved progressively away from the pessimistic view of man in relationship to God that was the hallmark of Puritanism, as expressed so brilliantly by Jonathan Edwards, toward a more congenial affirmation of man's potential to effect control of his own destiny. Henry argues that Beecher, while giving lip service to the Calvinism of the fathers, consistently preached that *man* could *choose* to accept God's grace:

> Early and late this was Lyman Beecher's message, that man is obligated and able to turn himself to God, and able also to establish and maintain society as testimony of his submission to heaven and joy in the gospel, refining the old and initiating the new in strict conformity to that law of God which is plainly declared in the Bible. (p. 58)

Henry vigorously defends his thesis, which is an able interpretation of Beecher's life. Through the use of effective quotations from the primary documents, the reader comes to understand that Beecher was a man of his times to a far greater extent than he, or many critics, ever realized. Although ever affirming the authenticity of the fathers' religion, the message Beecher proclaimed was in full harmony with the dominant thinking of the first half of the nineteenth century. Beecher would have it both ways, always insisting "that any man, every man, was able without spurning his birthright or laughing at heaven, to control the circumstances of his own life." (p. 252)

Stuart Henry has written a superb book which uses biography to illustrate his thesis about the development of Christian thought in America. This is not to say that the biography does not stand on its own as an important contribution. Henry has searched out all the Beecher papers and created a portrait of Lyman which is richer and truer than that of the famous *Autobiography*, which is actually a collection of letters, documents, and reminiscences compiled by Lyman's remarkable children. But the full significance of this book is not understood until it becomes clear in the reading that Henry is demonstrating the way in which Christian thought has shaped, and been shaped by, American society.

In his excellent interpretive biography of George Whitefield, Stuart Henry previously demonstrated his ability to use biography to highlight important issues in American Christianity. The portrait of Lyman Beecher is well-

researched, well-documented, and well-written. I emphasize the last point. Henry has the increasingly rare gift of turning a felicitous phrase; and he has taken pains to write a book that is not only worth reading but is eminently readable.

This volume is timely reading for those of us who are ministers and provides much food for thought. What is it that denotes effective ministry? Was Lyman Beecher effective as a minister of the Gospel? Henry shows that, for the most part, Lyman left each successive arena of ministry frustrated and convinced that "extraneous forces forever inhibited his effort to prod the world closer to model existence under the moral government of God." (p. 242) Despite Beecher's frustrations and doubts about his effectiveness, his impact was great and he merits continued attention not simply because of his progeny. Henry makes it clear that Beecher was important because he lived fully in his own time and consciously sought to develop means of effective ministry for those particular times.

It was not that Beecher sought to make Christianity relevant; he always rightly insisted it *was* relevant and no human efforts were needed to make it so. Nor was his attempt, at least not consciously, to accommodate society, or to solve social ills. Beecher vigorously opposed Unitarianism, perhaps the ultimate accommodation, and largely ignored the moral bankruptcy of slavery. Beecher did, however, take the present seriously and recognized that the message of the church must always be directed to the present. Beecher's abiding problem was the one all ministers face: How does one proclaim and interpret the continuity and richness of the Christian tradition in the face of social and intellectual change?

The early nineteenth century was no more or less difficult a time in which to minister than any other. Beecher's ministry was characterized by joy, hard work, and perseverance; we would all do well to pray for Beecher's stamina. He never gave up. Though the odds appeared insurmountable, he fought to the end confident that God, in his own good time, would prosper efforts directed at realizing the Gospel. Beecher was indeed an unvanquished Puritan.

—Dennis M. Campbell (Duke A.B. 1967, Ph.D. 1973)

[Dr. Campbell, a member of the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, was until recently Associate Minister of Trinity Church, Durham. He is now Assistant Professor and Chairman of the Department of Religion at Converse College, Spartanburg, South Carolina.]

Oxford Bible Atlas. Herbert G. May, ed. Oxford University Press. Second Edition, 1974. 144 pp. $9.95.

For understanding the biblical world or many aspects of the biblical text, an atlas is an indispensable tool. A number of reputable volumes have recently become available in addition to May: *New Atlas of the Biblical World,* by Jan Negenman, edited by H. H. Rowley (Doubleday, 1969); *The Macmillan Bible Atlas,* by Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah (Macmillan, 1968); *Atlas of the Biblical World,* by D. Baly and A. Tushingham (World, 1971); and *The Westminster Historical Atlas,* by G. E. Wright and F. Filson (Westminster, rev. ed., 1956). Soon to appear (1975) will be *Discovering the Biblical World* (Hammond Inc.), whose cartography is superior to all others. See comparative statistics:

Maps in the *Oxford Bible Atlas* have a limited range of colors, and include such areas as natural regions, vegetation, rainfall, boundaries, archaeological sites, etc. Special sites (e.g., cities of refuge, Solomonic forts, cities mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah) are indicated by color-coded dots, a unique and helpful system. The map of archaeological sites (detailed and

up-to-date) gives both biblical and modern Arabic place-names, a convenient combination of data that is usually scattered in other volumes. A limitation of this map (p. 95) is that it does not give the duration of habitation of each site (e.g., Early Bronze? Hellenistic?), but neither do the atlases cited above. There is very little treatment of the provincial systems (Assyrian, etc.) in contrast to the Macmillan atlas.

	May	Baly	Macmillan	Rowley	Westminster
number of pages	144	208	184	208	130
cost at publication	$9.95	12.95	14.95	19.95	?
bibliography	none	excel.	none	none	none
color photos: no.	none	16	none	53	none
quality	—	excel.	—	spectacular	—
black/w. photos: no.	89	53	none	104	82
quality	good	fair	—	excel.	good
sketches; drawings	none	none	hundreds	some	some
multicolor maps: quality	fair	excel.	none	good	fair
total no. of maps	27	49	264	34	36
integration of all the above with the text	excel.	fair	excel.	fair	good
coverage of natural geography	brief	excel.	brief	none	none
history	good survey	good survey	excel. detail	good survey	good survey
treatment of Arabic place-names	v. good	poor	good	fair	good

Those interested in more detailed comparisons will find my reviews of Macmillan and of Rowley in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 25 (1970), 570-571; and of Baly in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, 91 (1972), 578-579.

May's photos are spaced throughout the volume and thus can be directly related to the discussion on the same page, in contrast to Baly (where they are grouped) and Rowley (where there is little correlation with the text). There are rare violations of this principle, e.g., on p. 21, (where a photo of the Elephantine papyri precedes one of the Amarna texts). When a photo is relevant for a subsequent map discussion, there is an appropriate cross-reference.

The text has three major parts: (1) a general overview: "Israel and the Nations" (47 pp.); (2) the maps and accompanying discussion; and (3) "Archaeology and the Bible" (21 pp., with photos). The maps are generally full-page or more, and each is accompanied by detailed discussion on the same page-opening, a great convenience and aid to clarity. Occasionally, however, relevant discussion is separated from the map, e.g., that of climate (p. 11) from the map on p. 51.

The Gazetteer gives a brief identification of the sites mentioned in the text or maps, including biblical reference (if any) and the modern Arabic place-name. Conversely, the Arabic place-names are listed alphabetically (a "must" for understanding discussion of biblical geography in other volumes). It would have been helpful to have some indication of whether (in scholarly opinion) the proposed identification was certain or merely possible (such as one finds in the Macmillan atlas). Some certainly would fall into the latter category: e.g., that

Tell Beit Mirsim is Debir or that Tell el-Khalaifeh (sic!) is Ezion-geber/Elath.

The volume does not contain the beautiful color photos of the Rowley volume (or even of Baly), the excellent coverage of physical geography of the Baly volume, or the detailed historical discussion and the unexcelled maps of the Macmillan atlas. But one does receive a more coherent and convenient presentation, and in a scope which reduces costs. If one were limited to a single atlas, this one is perhaps the "best buy." If one can afford two, then a combination of Baly and Macmillan is unsurpassed.

—Lloyd Bailey

Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective—a Theology. Letty M. Russell. Westminster. 1974. 213 pp. $3.95.

This book is the one that many Christian women have been waiting for, and Christian men will also find the reading and discussion of it unusually rewarding. Dr. Russell gives a very helpful interpretation of the movement to liberate women and assures us that we can find in the Christian tradition the sources for our identity and true role as children of God. She also outlines the relationship of women's liberation to the other groups who have become conscious of their oppression, but she always speaks in the context of Jesus Christ and the Church.

I have to admit that I had to read the book twice in order to feel comfortable with it. My difficulty was with some of the terminology used in the theological discussions. I expect that those who are familiar with liberation theologies and theologies of hope will recognize the concepts more quickly. Indeed the author gives definitions of those terms that puzzled me. This is not a complaint, therefore, but encouragement to the readers of this book to keep reading because it is worth the effort.

Another frustration was in the need to discuss this material with others as I stopped to appreciate neat phrasing and especially effective theological summary. I believe that *Human Liberation* could be used for church study groups very successfully, and I recommend such use.

The *Foreword,* written by Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jürgen Moltmann, is helpful as a taste of what is coming, "an exceedingly fortunate combination of theology and life; of Christian action and Biblical reflection. . . . the reader will be invited, even urged, to discover his or her own task and potential, in order to participate in God's all-embracing liberation movement. . . ." (pp. 12-13)

From the introduction to the final pages the author demonstrates her concern with all those people who are yearning for freedom. She says: "This book comes out of my own experience in the search for liberation. Its very shape represents the constant process of action-reflection which has led me, in a journey with others, for others, toward God's future." (p. 21) Her journey has included work in an ecumenical parish of a black and Puerto Rican community in New York City, and service with the National Board of the YWCA of the United States and the YWCA of India. At present she is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at Yale University Divinity School.

Dr. Russell begins with an overview of the "Journey toward Freedom," reminding us of the section in *Romans* (8:22-23) in which Paul speaks of the whole universe groaning toward freedom. The liberation of women must involve the liberation of all their sisters and of other oppressed groups, and also must include the oppressors who are locked into the pattern of discrimination. Liberation theologies make a needed contribution to contemporary thought by pointing out that sin can be "the refusal to give others room to breathe and live as human beings." (p. 112)

She concisely describes the phenomenon that women will recognize as true: that the "specifically feminine forms of sin" are not so much those

of pride as of "triviality . . . lack of an organizing center . . . dependence on others for one's self-definition . . . tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence . . . in short, underdevelopment or negation of self." (p. 113)

The section "Incarnation and Humanization" was especially helpful to me. I have been dismayed at the call from "women's libbers" to give up the Church and Jesus Christ as source and support for women's liberation. Dr. Russell speaks of Christ as "the unique representative of God's humanity," and she says that women "must struggle to make clear that Christ's work was not first of all that of being a male but that of being a new human. . . . Christian women can see in Jesus a unique revelation of true personhood: One who helped both men and women to understand their total personhood." (p. 138) The true role of women is to cooperate with men in service to others on behalf of God, following the pattern of Christ as Suffering Servant.

Dr. Russell writes of the necessity of a dialogue between oppressor and oppressed, and, happily for us, gives specific suggestions concerning how each can begin to be open to the problems of the other. Her final "Prologue" reminds us that "we have only just begun the search for human liberation in a feminist perspective" and issues "an invitation to each person and group to join the others who have begun, in a continuing experiment of humanization." The reading and sharing of this book would be a significant way for us to begin.

—Harriet V. Leonard

Interpreting the New Testament Today: An Introduction to Methods and Issues in the Study of the New Testament. R. C. Briggs. Abingdon. 1973. 288 pp. Pb. $4.75.

This book is an expanded second edition of Professor Briggs' earlier work, *Interpreting the Gospels*, published in 1969. That work dealt primarily with methods and issues involved in Synoptic study. This new edition includes some revisions of and additions to the earlier work with new chapters on Paul and the Fourth Gospel, thus necessitating the change of title.

The purpose of the author is to make available for the "non-specialist" a ". . . brief, analytical description of the basic tools [in New Testament research] which are necessary for meaningful interpretation. . . ." (p. 17). The focus is centered on the Synoptic Gospels, Paul and the Gospel of John. The second goal is to give ". . . some implications of the use of these tools which contribute to meaningful understanding of the biblical message. . . ." (p. 17).

The author succeeds admirably in achieving both of his goals. The book is a well-written description of where New Testament studies are now and how this happened, and the author has accomplished this in simplified language for the novice. Each chapter deals with certain aspects of New Testament research. The topic is discussed, and at the end of each discussion there is a conclusion which summarizes in a clear and concise form the issues dealt with in the chapter. There are also some additions to certain chapters. These are labelled "Excursus" where Professor Briggs shows how one applies the principles of the preceding chapter to specific passages. This is especially helpful.

Some of the topics discussed are textual criticism, form-criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, the problem of Historical Jesus *vs.* Christ of Faith, Authority and Unity of the Scriptures, problems in interpreting the Scripture, and chapters on Paul and the Fourth Gospel.

Professor Briggs has pointed out issues, tentative conclusions, areas of controversy, and given his own evaluations in a manner that is both informative and challenging. I commend this book to pastors and students alike, for review of or introduction to problems of New Testament interpretation. At today's prices it is a bargain in this area.

—James M. Efird

To See the Kingdom: The Theological Vision of H. Richard Niebuhr. James W. Fowler. Abingdon. 1974. 292 pp. $10.95.

H. Richard Niebuhr has emerged as one of the most influential American theologians and ethicists in the 20th century. This study of his thought by James Fowler of the Harvard Divinity School faculty (incidentally, a Duke B.A.) is the most thorough and impressive attempt to trace the development of Niebuhr's thought that we have had thus far. It is an expansion and revision of Fowler's doctoral dissertation, but differs notably from such usually ponderous exercises in that it is lucid and readable, and in this case incorporates materials from some unpublished manuscripts to which Fowler had access. One of these, "Faith on Earth," was a full-length book manuscript from the 1950's, a fascinating probe into the phenomenology of faith. One may hope that the glimpses Fowler gives from this manuscript may prompt someone to see to its posthumous publication in full.

Niebuhr was averse to the Teutonic habit of writing systems of theology or ethics. He suspected all dogmatic final judgments; his own conclusions were always put tentatively. Yet, as Fowler traces the evolution of his thought, he makes evident the kind of integrity, a singleness of direction, in the pilgrimage of Niebuhr's thought. The *leit-motif* is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. From his first published article, "An Aspect of the Idea of God in Recent Thought" (1920) until *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (1960) a dominant preoccupation of Niebuhr was with the meaning of the primal affirmation of the Christian faith: *credo in unum deum*. His Jacobean wrestle with this first and last mystery of existence led him to an independent position quite to the right of the liberalism of Troeltsch and of his Yale schooling, but also more intra-historical than Barth's Christo-monism. Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Bergson, Troeltsch, Whitehead, Tillich, are all strong influences, as were the tragic events of the war and the revolutions of the middle decades of the century, but Niebuhr's final faith-stance is uniquely his own. It is interesting to note that in the "Faith on Earth" manuscript he came to affirm, albeit on existentialist rather than biblically literalistic grounds, a quite orthodox and "high" Christology: "That Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and that he sits at the right hand of God exercising power over us, that is one of the most patent facts in interpersonal history." (quo. p. 230)

Fowler rightly focuses his attention on one of the richest aspects of Niebuhr's thought: his analysis of faith as trust and loyalty. He traces out carefully and appreciatively the way in which the trust in the grace of God bears with man's distrust and misplaced devotions and leads out of polytheism and henotheism to a trust in the first and last one, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his critical estimate of Niebuhr's legacy as ethicist, it seems to this reviewer he quite wrongly takes Niebuhr to task for failing to provide sufficient principles and guidelines for decisions and action. A quick recollection of my own lecture notes from Niebuhr's course in ethics indicates no "rules," to be sure, but there are definitive guidelines: the ethics of stewardship, in response to God's creative activity, the ethics of discipline and restraint in response to God's action as governor, the ethics of forgiveness and reconciliation in response to God's redemption. Fowler *is* on target, however, in pointing to the problem that Niebuhr's strength in providing built-in guards against idolatry and self-pretension becomes a weakness in not providing guidelines "to adjudicate between the conflicting value-claims of other persons or causes than our own." (p. 263)

The inclusion at the end of the book, incidentally, of an outline of topics and bibliography for Niebuhr's lecture course in Christian Ethics for

1952-53 does not add anything of value. His bibliography of all of Niebuhr's writings, published and unpublished, on the other hand, should prove of great worth for future scholarship.

—Waldo Beach

A Process Christology. David R. Griffin. Westminster. 1973. 273 pp. $10.95.

In Part I Professor Griffin expounds selected features of the theology of Tillich, H. R. Niebuhr, Bultmann and Schleiermacher with a view toward showing how their thought, along with important contributions, points forward to the need for an appropriate process Christology. In Part II Griffin undertakes to develop a revelational Christology in the basic conceptual framework of Whiteheadian process philosophy under the mentorship of John Cobb. The basic interpretation of the person and work of Christ throughout the book is that of the one who may evoke an important alteration in our fundamental cognitive "vision of reality." How we are to determine the appropriate content of this cognitive vision is not entirely clear. It is not simply a matter of our appropriating *Jesus'* vision of reality, since this requires some substantial improvement (pp. 204-5, 234) along lines developed by Whitehead and Hartshorne.

Griffin's basic exposition of the Whiteheadian conceptuality in terms of a revelatory interpretation of God's personal act of self-expression is in a sense Whiteheadian. But the sense in which it is "Whiteheadian" is mostly in its loose, imprecise, ambiguous and equivocal employment of some technical Whiteheadian language along with the introduction of major concepts which may enhance and enrich the apparent meaning of the Whiteheadian framework—such as "relations," "existential dimensions," "agency," "character," "person" and "selfhood"—but which are no part of the technical terminology and categories of that framework. Since the concept of "person" is not a basic category in the Whiteheadian understanding of *us* (the reader may notice that Griffin does not quote or footnote Whitehead on this issue), I fail to see how it either has been or could be "argued cogently" that, even though Whitehead himself did not speak this way, it would somehow be "much more consistent with Whitehead's principles to speak of God as a living person." (p. 181)

Whitehead's God functions as a kind of differential filter which allows relevant ordering-possibilities from the "forms" or "eternal objects" to become available as "ideal aims" in reaction to the ongoing spontaneous "creativity" which is characteristic only of "self-creating creatures," not of God. This may in some faded sense still be somewhat "like" the Biblical view of God as Creator and Lord of history. But it is far more like Plato's view of God in the *Timaeus* and perhaps even more like modern conceptions of cybernetic "feed-back" relations.

Professor Griffin is apparently not writing for the Whiteheadian scholar, but rather for the general reader who has some interest in Christology but who knows little if anything about Whitehead. For that readership he is apparently endeavoring to maximize the impression of affinity between the Whiteheadian framework and Biblical theism. In my judgment an age which may sometimes tend to relish novel and impressionistic presentations of theology needs, whether or not it always wants, to receive from the "philosophical" theologian a clearer and more straightforward confrontation with basic issues than Griffin has here provided.

As a kind of Postscript—I wonder whether Griffin's own judgment (pp. 163-4) upon the earlier history of theology might not conceivably have some relevance to the neo-Whiteheadian enterprise of interpreting theology: "the formative theologians . . . could have allowed their faith that the (Hebrew) Jesus was the de-

cisive revelation of reality more radically to inform their thinking . . . allowing Jesus to revolutionize the philosophical concept of God, rather reconciling their assertions about Jesus to this non-Biblical idea of God."

—Charles K. Robinson

John Wesley and the Bible: A Psychological Study. Thorvald Källstad. Translated by Roy Fox, Alexander de Courcy and Carl Victor Schmidt. Nya Bokförlags Aktiefolaget. Stockholm. 1974. 356 pp.

Originally written in Swedish, this book is the doctoral dissertation of the principal of the Methodist Theological Seminary in Gothenburg, Sweden. It was accepted in the Spring of 1974 at the University of Uppsala and is the first work in the series Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Psychologia Religionum.

The book is an attempt to understand the development of Wesley's personality in terms of the biblical tradition which was a part of his reference system. The role theory of Hjalmar Sundén is the instrument which Källstad uses to give "a psychological interpretation of certain traits in Wesley's religious development, and as far as possible a psychological interpretation of his personality within that development." (p. 28) According to Källstad, Sundén's theory implies the existence within religious traditions of role systems. These roles are then adopted under certain circumstances by those familiar with the religious traditions. Within the Bible there are several role models which one familiar with that tradition may actualize. Since, according to Källstad, the Bible emphasizes the interaction between God and persons, it is the constant assimilation of those interactive portions of the biblical tradition which prepares a person for role-taking, either as one in interaction with God or as one who takes the role of God.

Källstad analyzes the cognitive processes involved in Sundén's role theory using Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. According to this hypothesis the human organism continually strives to establish "internal harmony, consistency or congruity among his opinions, attitudes, knowledge and values." (p. 32) Using these two main principles, Källstad attempts to answer twelve questions centering around the origin, development and effect of Wesley's biblical frame of reference, Wesley's relationship to various biblical roles, the origin within these roles of Wesley's belief system, and Wesley's cognitive decision process in relation to the elements of his belief system.

In addition to the two main psychological theories, Källstad also employs George A. Kelly's psychology of personal constructs, Richard S. Lazarus' view of the coping process, and Kurt Lewin's "field-theory."

Following the Introduction in which Källstad reviews the background and methodology of his study, the first three chapters analyze various influences on Wesley's development. The topics considered include Wesley's family and childhood, the influence of Jeremy Taylor, Thomas à Kempis, and William Law on the development of Wesley's biblical frame of reference, and the origin and importance for Wesley of the style of life of the so-called 'Oxford Methodists.'

The next ten chapters analyze on the basis of the five psychological theories several key events and factors in Wesley's life prior to 1739. This analysis begins in chapter 4 with a discussion of how Wesley dealt with the opposition to Oxford Methodism. Chapters 5-9 consider the function of the biblical frame of reference during Wesley's voyage to America (1735-36) and the influence of Moravian faith and behavior both during and following that voyage, the stress created over Wesley's relationships with Mrs. Hawkins and Sophia Hopkey, and Wesley's attraction to and reaction against certain mystics. The final series of events consists of the conflict between the Anglican and Moravian

models of faith, and Wesley's Aldersgate experience and visits with the Moravians in Holland and Germany as means of resolving this conflict. (chapters 10-12) Chapter 13 deals with Wesley's development of a new self-understanding which Källstad characterizes as the adoption of the role "Evangelical Prophet." Chapter 14 states comprehensive answers to the twelve questions posed in the Introduction.

While Källstad's study provides the reader with a helpful tool for viewing Wesley's psychological development, it also contains several historical problems which may mislead the reader. The title of the first subsection of chapter 1 is "John Benjamin Wesley—Child of Reconciliation." This title repeats the error of other Wesley scholars, such as John A. Newton, John Telford, and Luke Tyerman, who indicate that Wesley's middle name was "Benjamin." According to the baptismal records at Lincoln, "John Wesley" was the full name of the child born to Susanna and Samuel Wesley June 17, 1703 and baptized July 3. (See Frank Baker, "The Wesley Family," *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, p. 2512.)

Another problem is the dating of Wesley's first reading of William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Källstad places this reading in 1729. Contrary to Källstad and not cited by him, Frank Baker argues convincingly for the later date of December, 1730 (*Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XXXVII [1969], 78-82). This creates a serious difficulty for the relationship described by Källstad (p. 80) between Wesley's new pattern of life at Oxford and the influence of *A Serious Call* on the establishment of that pattern.

On p. 52 the reader could be misled by Källstad's statement that Susanna gave John special attention "immediately" after the rectory fire of February 9, 1709. In fact, it is not until Susanna's evening meditation of May 17, 1711 that we have any record of a resolve on her part to give special attention to her son John. And, contrary to Källstad (p. 47), it is far from obvious from the record itself that Susanna considered John's rescue "an act of Providence."

There are also several instances in which Källstad indicates the probability or certainty of a relationship when no such probability or certainty is obvious. For instance, on p. 124 Källstad says that the words of Ps. 23:4 "must have been an adequate expression of what Wesley himself felt" in relationship to his anxiety over death at the end of his voyage to Georgia. With reference to the landing in Georgia on February 6, 1736, Källstad concludes that Wesley "must have remembered vividly his experiences during the crossing" when he referred to Jesus walking on water and urging his disciples to have no fear. There is, however, no evidence cited (or available, to the knowledge of this reviewer) to support either of these conclusions.

The study concludes that it was Wesley's belief system and more specifically his biblical frame of reference which enabled him to resolve the various incidents of dissonance in his life and which shaped his coping process with respect to similar incidents. This belief system, then, served as a primary element in the development of Wesley's personality.

While Källstad provides in terms of modern psychological theory a thorough analysis and elaboration of the development of Wesley's personality, his problematic use and interpretation of historical data raise doubts about any conclusions which are based upon such data. On the other hand, *John Wesley and the Bible* does provide a framework and basis for further exploration into the development and functioning of the belief system of a historical figure. As such the work may serve as a model for future efforts in the study of the historical dimensions of the psychology of religion.

—R. Michael Casto

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A New Thing

by Joseph B. Bethea
Director of Black Church Studies

The emergence of Black Church Studies in theological education in general, and particularly in Duke Divinity School, is a new thing. It is new in the sense that it is now appearing for the first time. It is new also in the sense that it promises to refresh and remake what is not new.

When Stokely Carmichael echoed the precipitous phrase "Black Power," only a few people grasped the vast implications of the phrase. It was an echo. It was an echo of Frederick Douglas, who in an address at the 1857 West India Emancipation Celebration at Canandaigua, New York, said:

> The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. . . . If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. . . . Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.[1]

"Black Power" was an echo of Adam Clayton Powell, who said in the 1966 baccalaureate address at Howard University, "To demand our God-given rights is to seek black power—the power to build black institutions of splendid achievement."[2]

It was the context of the echo that gave it special significance and impetus in June, 1966. Carmichael said it on the James Meredith March between Memphis and Jackson. He said it against the backdrop of serious confrontation in American race relations. When the decade of the sixties began, Black Americans were poised

1. Lerone Bennett, *Confrontation: Black and White* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965) p. 57.

2. Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972) p. 247.

for what was hoped would be a final march into the promised land of freedom and dignity and unqualified citizenship in this nation. It was assumed that we had been emancipated from the house of American bondage and had wandered long enough in the wilderness of segregation and discrimination. Surely the centennial of our emancipation would find us truly free.

Inspired by the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., Black Americans and sympathetic whites launched a series of nonviolent demonstrations that the nation could not ignore. The sit-ins and kneel-ins, the freedom rides and the freedom walks, the March on Washington, and numerous acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience across the land pricked the conscience of this nation. In all of these confrontations, the dream and the theme were one.

> We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
> We shall overcome some day;
> Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
> We shall overcome some day.
> Black and white together, black and white together,
> Black and white together some day;
> Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
> We shall overcome some day.

Some major victories were won. Congress responded by enacting civil rights legislation that changed the course of race relations in America forever. Some critics of the freedom movement of the sixties might suggest that nothing of real significance was accomplished. But let it be remembered that the "dream" has never died; it is still that for which we labor and impatiently wait.

Victory and defeat, joy and frustration, dreams partly fulfilled and partly denied, were Black America's legacy from the early sixties. The truth of Douglas's statement was coming into focus.

> . . . Power concedes nothing without a demand. . . . If we ever get free . . . we must pay . . . by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice . . .

Thus when Carmichael echoed the sentiment, it was a cry and a call around which a frustrated and disillusioned people could rally.

"Black Power!" Black people began to understand that the successes of the early sixties, while they were important, did not really begin to alter the concentration of power and racism in America. Racism is the American heritage and the American tradition. It is supported and sustained by her hallowed institutions. Marches and speeches and congressional action have thus far proven to be inadequate to change the pattern. The poor are yet poor.

Blacks are yet oppressed. Any adequate solution to this nation's racial problems must deal with the question of power. "Black Power!" All of the controversy and negative reaction created by the phrase cannot begin to compare with the positive contributions it brings to race relations in America and around the world today.

To insure a positive articulation of the concept of Black Power, "an informal group of Negro churchmen" met and produced a statement that was published in the New York Times on July 31, 1966. To the leaders of America, the statement said:

> When American leaders decide to serve the real welfare of people instead of war and destruction; when American leaders are forced to make the rebuilding of our cities first priority on the nation's agenda; when American leaders are forced by the American people to quit misusing and abusing American power; then will the cry for "black power" become inaudible, for the framework in which all power in America operates would include the power and experience of black men as well as those of white men. . . .

To white churchmen, the statement said:

> As black men who were long ago forced out of the white church to create and to wield "black power," we fail to understand the emotional quality of the outcry of some clergy against the use of the term today. . . . So long as white churchmen continue to moralize and misinterpret Christian love, so long will justice continue to be subverted in this land.[3]

The informal group of Negro churchmen became the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, and since then, the National Committee of Black Churchmen. They set themselves to the task of reforming the black church, of rechanneling the strength and power of the black church, making it a politically involved institution for the freedom and liberation of black people. Since theology and the white church had never spoken with relevance to the black experience and condition, it became necessary to raise some different questions and find some different answers. The struggle of black people for freedom and justice and power had to be theologized. The existence of the church as a viable institution in the black community was at stake. A new thing was needed and a new thing was created.

At the first convocation of the National Committee of Negro Churchmen in 1967, "there was unanimous agreement that further theological work needed to be done."[4] In response to this need, a

3. The New York Times, July 31, 1966, p. E 5.
4. Wilmore, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

series of events and publications followed which was to establish black religious studies, or black church studies as an integral part of any theological education that would be relevant in this latter part of the 20th century.

In 1964, Joseph Washington had published *Black Religion.* He described how Negro religion has been created and sustained by the forces of segregation and discrimination in the United States, and challenged white and black Christians to close the gap between creed and deed.

In 1965, George Kelsey published *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man,* in which he cited racism as an idolatrous faith and described the renewed individual in a racist society.

(Of course the works cited above were not the primordial literature of the black religious experience and racism. Numerous black scholars had dealt with the subject earlier. A few among them are E. Franklin Frazier, Ruby F. Johnston, Martin Luther King, Jr., Eric Lincoln and Benjamin Mays.)

In 1967, the National Committee of Negro Churchmen created a Theological Commission "to determine what might be the ingredients of a basic theological position paper which would clarify the growing interest in "Black Theology."[5] The Commission was instructed to prepare a report for the 1968 convocation of NCNC.

In 1968, Albert Cleage published *The Black Messiah.* In twenty sermons, the pastor of the Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit preached Black Power Christianity. He proclaimed the unity which the black church can bring to the black people's struggle for freedom, and "the resurrection of a Black Church with its own Black Messiah."

A brief glance at the flurry of activity of black churchmen between 1968 and 1971 will suffice to document the determination to theologize the black movement. Almost every major religious journal published articles by black churchmen and scholars; books on the black religious experience were written by James Cone, Joseph Johnson, Major Jones, Henry Mitchell, J. Deotis Roberts, Nathan Wright and others; and the Society for the Study of Black Religion was organized.

In October, 1968, 300 black churchmen gathered in St. Louis for the Second Annual Convocation of NCBC. A week later 400 black clergy and seminarians gathered in Boston for a consultation on the black church. Both of these meetings underscored the grow-

5. *Ibid.,* p. 287.

ing estrangement of blacks from the white church and intensified "the movement toward a new black church and a new black theology."[6]

In April, 1969, the Black Economic Development Conference met in Detroit and adopted the Black Manifesto, which James Forman read a few days later in Riverside Church in New York. In June, 1969, the Theological Commission of the National Committee of Black Churchmen met in Atlanta and issued its first public statement on the nature and meaning of Black Theology.

In February, 1970, the American Association of Theological Schools convened a Conference on the Black Religious Experience and Theological Education. It culminated the work of a committee of black educators which had been created by the Association's Executive Committee in 1968.

I have cited these activities so that we may have some appreciation of the time and effort that have been required to create this new thing called Black Church Studies. Concurrent with these activities and subsequently, black caucuses have been organized, denominationally and ecumenically, and black scholars are publishing an ever-expanding body of literature regarding the black religious experience. Theological education in America will never be the same. Something new has emerged. It is refreshing and will remake what is not new.

Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School is a new thing. The program was begun less than three years ago, and it promises to refresh and remake what has been traditional at Duke.

When a Director of Black Church Studies was appointed in June, 1972, the position was described as follows.

> This man would bring an awareness of the role of the Black Church and of the role of the black minister. He would have primary initiatory responsibility in designing and coordinating the courses, in the responsibility of searching for and recommending prospective black faculty, in continuing education for black ministers in the surrounding areas, in the recruitment of black students, in advising black students in planning their course of study, in supervising them in their Field Work, in handling the financial and adjustmental needs of the Black Seminarians.

With this appointment Duke Divinity School began its response to "the movement toward a new black church and a new black theology." The movement is founded upon the faith and commitment of numerous black churchpersons and black scholars who are determined, under God, to right the long years of neglect re-

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6. *Tempo,* December 1, 1968, p. 2.

garding the black religious experience in America. Those who have doubts are invited to examine the works of scholars mentioned in this article; observe the contributions which persons like Herbert Edwards and Philip Cousin of Duke are currently making to theological education. It is quite evident that the movement will not be abandoned until the last trace of racism is eradicated from theological education and from the church which theological education is designed to serve. The warrant for black church studies is white racism, and any theological enterprise that today does not take into account the black religious experience is racist yet, and cannot claim to be Christian.

Concurrent with the "movement toward a new black church and a new black theology" is the emergence of a new black seminarian. In most instances black church studies have been initiated only after constant petition and pressure to do so by black students. In February, 1969, some black seminarians at Duke made six major proposals to the administration.

1. Hire black faculty members.
2. Hire black staff members.
3. Offer courses that would treat the black experience and incorporate, when relevant, black content into existing courses.
4. Aid black students academically by hiring an Advisor.
5. Launch a crash program of recruitment.
6. Improve student-faculty relationship.

Negotiations between black seminarians and the administration were begun. When action to implement the proposals was not evident, the Black Seminarians Union was formally organized at Duke. Among the various goals of the Union was the full implementation of the proposals; they were ultimately formulated into a comprehensive proposal for a program in Black Church Studies.

Black Seminarians at Duke had three dimensions in their proposal. The first dimension called for the development and offering of new courses which deal realistically and scholarly with the black religious experience and have the academic purpose of developing a body of knowledge and appropriate methodologies to treat that body of knowledge. The second dimension of the proposal called for the development of a cooperative relationship with black churches and black church leaders in Durham and in North Carolina for relevant and meaningful field education and continuing education experiences. In this way, the Divinity School contributes

to the ongoing life of the black churches in the area. The third dimension of the proposal called for exploration of the possibilities and methods of an exchange of faculty and students between Duke and black theological schools in the region. Such exchange would make available to all the best resources of each.

A new black church, a new black theology, and a new black seminarian; these are the movements to which Duke responded when a program of Black Church Studies was established in 1972. Before that time, the Divinity School had sought to meet the needs of its black students through the use of black faculty members in other departments of the University and other scholarly associates in instruction who were recruited to offer courses and advice. The present status of black church studies at Duke represents a new appreciation of the Black Church—the repository of black culture and the vanguard of the black liberation struggle.

With the appointment of an Associate Professor of Black Church Studies (Dr. Herbert Edwards joined the faculty in September, 1974) and the increase in black student enrollment (almost ten per cent of the total enrollment) Duke Divinity School has moved a bit further in its commitment to the Black Church and its ministry. In November, 1974, the Black Church Studies Center was authorized by the Dean and faculty. The preamble of the authorizing document states:

> Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School is an engagement of the Divinity School with the black church, black theology, and the black community; and represents an appreciation for study of and involvement in black religious experiences. The Black Church Studies Center exists to illuminate the several dimensions of these experiences, to investigate and expose the contributions which the black church has made and can make to both the black community and American culture, and to actualize the potential for service to the Church through its special concerns for ministry and mission to black people in both church and community. The Center is a concrete expression of the role of Black Church Studies in theological education which undertakes faithfully to serve Christ and his Church.

Black Church Studies is a new thing at Duke Divinity School. It is new in its chronology. It is also new in the sense that, as we embrace it, there is possibility for the reconstruction of the total theological enterprise. At every point in history when the Lord would do a new thing among his people, the temptation is to accommodate the new to what is old. It may fit; it may not. It is new.

The far-reaching implications of Black Church Studies for the wholeness of theological education at Duke cannot now be mea-

sured. But we are sure that we have embarked upon a course with tremendous potential for what we do here and for the church we serve. We have begun a new thing. We will continue until the hope of freedom and liberation and justice is a reality for all people, and is reflected in the church of Jesus Christ and in the education of his ministers.

> Thus says the LORD,
> who opened a way in the sea
> and a path through mighty waters,
> who drew on chariot and horse to their destruction,
> a whole army, men of valour;
> there they lay, never to rise again;
> they were crushed, snuffed out like a wick:
> Cease to dwell on days gone by
> and to brood over past history.
> Here and now I will do a new thing;
> this moment it will break from the bud.
> Can you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:16-19)

Black Theology: Past, Present and Future

by A. Roger Williams
Pastor, Union Baptist Church, Hartford, Conn.

Background

Since the middle sixties, the word black has been one of the most controversial adjectives in the English language. Stokely Carmichael's courageous battle cry, "Black Power," uttered in avowedly racist Mississippi, disturbed the white power structure, North as well as South.

Moreover, it disturbed a host of integrationist-oriented blacks. Among them are men of integrity and achievement—Roy Wilkins of the N.A.A.C.P., Whitney Young of the Urban League and Martin L. King, Jr., whose monumental efforts for the blacks, the poor and the oppressed enshrines him unforgettably in myriad hearts.

Now comes black theology! While the name is new, the actuality delves far back into American slavery. Yet there are eminently recognized and respected theologians and New Testament Scholars, black and white, who question and scorn such a concept. On the other hand, it is gaining increasing acceptance in the U. S. as well as in Continental Europe.

In the Christian Century, Frederick Herzog of Duke Divinity School has written an article on "Political Theology." Theology, he states, is always a mixture of the gospel's eternal message and a particular situation in time.[1]

I once saw a large poster in a young man's bedroom. It pictured the determined yet anxious face of a young black. The right side of his cap rested almost on his ear. Resting higher on the left side, it revealed part of an Afro. The young man wore a leather coat. His arms were folded across his chest. The print read, "the toughest job in America—being black."

So, James H. Cone, Albert Cleage, William Jones of Yale Divinity School, Gayraud Wilmore, late of Boston University

1. Christian Century, July 23, 1969, p. 975.

School of Theology, Herbert O. Edwards of Duke Divinity School, are a few black scholars who are rendering incalculable service to American Theology by applying the "gospel's eternal message" to twenty-five million blacks about whose condition no white theologian, until very recent times, has seriously concerned himself. They with others agree with Herzog's succinctly expressed truth in the Preface to his recently published book, *Liberation Theology*, "The WASP mind that controls everything—including religion—has to be changed."[2]

The Past

To consider the future of black theology in the black church one does well to share thinking on the past and present. Let us remind ourselves once more that black theology, unlike a ship christened for its maiden voyage, has been here as long as this nation, but has been belatedly named.

In the early twentieth century, Dr. Robert Russa Moton, Booker T. Washington's successor at Tuskegee Institute, wrote a book entitled, *What The Negro Thinks*. The Negro's thinking was not half so well known to the white man as the white man's thinking was to the Negro. Since the Negro was only a fraction of a man, the employer acted as though he was non-existent. So, the black was his waiter, his porter, his bell boy, his valet, his cook, his chauffeur, his general factotum. The black dressed the master in the morning, served him at the breakfast table, absorbed his thoughts as he cut his hair or shined his shoes. Hence he knew the white man by smiling when it was to his advantage economically, and saying what the "cap'n" wanted to hear.

But the white never really knew "George." Isn't it strange, how so many blacks years ago were "George" or "boy" or "uncle"! It was not known that they were men of dignity in their homes and churches and lodges. The overlord was not aware that they scraped and saved to send their offspring to college. Their nickels and dimes and quarters bought homes and insurance and churches. They wrought better than they knew.

So it was during oppressive slavery. Gayraud S. Wilmore in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* points this out:

> In the first place, little is known about the actual content of slave preaching when whites were not in the congregation.

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2. Frederick Herzog, *Liberation Theology*, p. ix.

> Secondly, what writers like Olmstead and other early historians have given us about the conservatism and other-worldliness of the black preacher and the slave church they received from the Negroes themselves, who were not about to tell white people all they knew about the complicity of their preachers in revolutionary activity.[3]

To be sure, here and there a house slave would occasionally curry the oppressor's favor by divulging plots of his more militant freedom-loving fellow slaves.

Nat Turner, Virginia insurrectionist, refused to internalize oppression. He fasted, prayed, studied the Bible. As he studied the Old Testament martyrs, he felt divinely led to liberate his colleagues. Nothing deterred him from his mission. *Pioneers in Protest,* authored by Lerone Bennett, Jr., describes Turner's experience:

> All his life he had been preparing for this task, and now, in the year of 1828, he was almost ready. On May 12 of that year, Nat said, He heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the spirit instantly said the serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first.[4]

Who knows what his startling revolt August 21, 1831, did for the morale of his crushed brethren and against the morale of insensitive slave holders?

Henry H. Garnett escaped slavery in Maryland. Later he secured an education and became a pastor in Troy, N. Y. Though less than thirty, he fought tirelessly for black liberation. Bennett depicts him declaiming against servitude at the 1843 Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York. In stentorian voice he bids slaves settle for nothing less than liberation:

> Your condition does not absolve you from your moral obligation. The diabolical injustice by which your liberties are cloven down, neither God, nor angels, or just men, command you to suffer for a single moment. Therefore it is your solemn and imperative duty to use every means, both moral, intellectual and physical that promise success.[5]

Not all black churchmen of the pre-Civil War era acted with the revolutionary ardor of Turner or blazed with the incandescent indignation of Garnett. Nevertheless, they never let the black man forget he was God's image in ebony. Their means were different, but their ends were the same.

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3. G. S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism,* p. 45.
4. Lerone Bennett, *Pioneers in Protest,* pp. 91-92.
5. *Ibid.,* p. 153.

They protested injustice with all their power. Like the unknown soldier, some are "known but to God." Others are coming increasingly to light. Bishop Richard Allen of the A.M.E. Church; Bishop James Varick of the A.M.E.Z. Church; Prince Hall, whose clerical labors in late eighteenth-century Boston improved the lot of the despised freedmen; Absalom Jones, founder of the first Black Episcopal Church in Philadelphia; and Thomas Paul, founder of the African Baptist Church in Boston in 1805, progenitor of historic Twelfth Baptist Church and People's Baptist Church. This number could be multiplied.

A second stage of the black church is what G. S. Wilmore designates as its "deradicalization." The pristine joys of an illusory emancipation blunted its militancy. Post-Reconstruction political backlash stymied gains. The accommodationist policy of Booker T. Washington became representative of black institutions. A rising middle class imitated and aped the decadent white churches. Bishop Henry N. Turner of heroic mold, who died in 1915, could not stem this tide almost singlehanded.

Black Theology Today

What is the status of black theology currently in the black church? There is neither an easy answer nor a single answer to that query. One is reminded of the testimony a brother gave at Prayer Meeting:

> We ain't what we ought to be;
> We ain't what we want to be;
> We ain't what we gonna' be;
> But thank God, We ain't what we was.

Albert Cleage in *Black Christian Nationalism* points out:

> Black people have come a long way since 1954. We have come by many paths from many different directions. Today in most churches there is a feeling that we would like our church to be a part of the black liberation struggle.[6]

Is it not encouraging to see our choirs in black churches joyfully and unashamedly singing the haunting spirituals? They were wrought out of the suffering and anguish of slaves, but blacks were ashamed of them. Since it is now recognized as the only original musical art form America can boast, as well as an important part of Afro-American heritage, can blacks do less than embrace it?

Here and there churches and Sunday Schools and black caucuses demand more literature that depicts the black experience. At a

6. Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *Black Christian Nationalism*, p. 233.

youth conference in Springfield, Massachusetts, some time ago, it was a pleasant surprise to see painted on the wall behind the pulpit the Black Christ by a baptismal pool.

In the fall of 1974 the Greater Hartford Ministerial Alliance, composed of black clergy of all denominations, adjourned to go downtown as a body to sit and speak on behalf of a black businessman whose request to drive his one bus interstate was bitterly opposed by a bevy of lawyers representing lines that selfishly sought to keep him out. He came to thank the Alliance on February 4, 1975, that the petition was finally granted. That is an incarnation of black theology in contemporary form. A critic might rightly state these things are not much. None can deny that. It is significant that movement is in the right direction, not how far we have gone or how much has been done.

Who has been more guilty than the evangelical, conservative and fundamentalist churches of white racism and civil religion? Through the years this gospel has had a vertical but not a horizontal dimension. Orthodox doctrine counted more than orthodox living.

Through black evangelicals like Tom Skinner, William Pannell and maybe others, changes are taking place. Richard Tuebedeaux tells of it in the rewarding book, *The Young Evangelicals.* He writes:

> But probably his most powerful statement on the necessity of a nonracist Christian message was Skinner's speech to the Young Evangelicals at Urbana '70, for which he received a standing ovation. In it he blasts without apology the hypocrisy of evangelical churches.[7]

To a great extent the evangelical church in America supported the status quo. It supported slavery; it supported segregation; it preached against any attempt of the black man to stand on his own two feet. And those who sought to communicate the gospel to black people did it in a way to make sure they stayed cool. "We will preach the gospel to those folks so they won't riot, we will preach the gospel to them so we can keep the lid on the garbage pail." And so they were careful to point out such scriptures as "Obey your masters"; "Love your enemy"; "Do good to them that hurt you." But no one ever talked about a message that would also speak to the oppressor.

Again Tuebedeaux presents Black Evangelist William Pannell, an associate of Tom Skinner and a trustee of Fuller Theological

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7. Richard Tuebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals,* p. 117.

Seminary. Pannell demands that Evangelicals repudiate the Christ of white, suburban America and its civil religion in favor of the universal risen Lord Jesus Christ, who liberates and reconciles an oppressed humanity:

> Here we clearly need to preach a Christ who moves alongside of contemporary man, helping him to affirm his individuality and personal worth. Unfortunately, He often comes through as Anglo-Saxon, Protestant suburban, Republican. Black young people simply cannot identify with that kind of Christ in a racist society. . . . The sin of Evangelicalism is not that we are un-American. It is rather that we are more American than Christian.[8]

The Skinners and the Pannells are saying something to us. First, that Black Theology is reaching young black men of conservative stance. Also that these prophetic young black preachers are trumpeting this message to young believers from churches which gave no more thought to the daily dehumanization of black people than it did to holding service next Sunday.

Those who attended the funeral of Adam C. Powell, colorful pastor of Harlem's historic Abyssinian Baptist Church, may recall Dr. Samuel Proctor's memorable words in eulogy, "He roared like a lion and snapped like a dragon in defense of all those who were being snuffed out slowly by steady oppression." Alas, this is atypical! One listens almost in vain for such a forthright diction in the pulpits, conventions and conferences of black churches.

In his *Politics of God* Joseph R. Washington is not too happy with today's black church. He states:

> Heretofore, the function of the Negro church has been that of a leaven. In effect, it has served as a cut-rate social outlet, selling itself for quantity rather than quality, offering cheap white medicine in colored doses of several hours of relief for a week.[9]

Interviewed by Newsweek in the Spring of 1963, Dr. J. H. Jackson, longtime president of the National Baptist Convention, is recorded as having said:

> There is a danger that we may become so anxious to win an immediate victory for the race, that we will make secondary the winning of spiritual victory for the nation and for the advancement of the Kingdom of God among the children of men. The Negro Church must at any cost add the salt of love and goodwill to the struggle for better human relations, so we can contend without being contentious and struggle for the right without becoming selfish or bitter.

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8. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
9. Joseph R. Washington, Jr., *The Politics of God*, p. 209.

There is little reason to believe President Jackson's thinking has changed materially in the last decade. Gayraud S. Wilmore puts us on notice, lest one think that other black denominations are presently more progressive than black Baptists. In his informative, absorbing *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* he declares:

> Moreover the historic Black Methodist denominations and the three major Black Baptist Conventions followed King in taking no notice of the National Committee of Negro Churchmen. Indeed one or two of the Black denominations came perilously close to repudiating Black Power.[10]

Albert B. Cleage writes in his book *Black Christian Nationalism*:

> The Black Church is out of it. Black preachers are out of it, and a number of young Black seminarians are out of it, because they are out of touch with the Black Community. They still wonder how much money they are going to make and who must die before they can get a big church.[11]

Unapologetically abrasive, Cleage nevertheless tries to confront pastors and some divinity students with unpalatable veracity. Clergy ride their cars and no longer meet people. Many blacks feel ill at ease coming into churches composed primarily of blacks who have internalized white middle class values. Eyes look daggers at the person who may be dressed shabbily, who lacks smug gentility, whose English needs refining. In too many of our black churches respectability is compulsory while regeneration is an elective!

Dr. Cone, frank but less harsh than Cleage, sees black theology given minimal consideration, if any, in black churches. *Black Theology and Black Power* expresses his disenchantment:

> So far the Black Church has remained conspicuously silent, continuing its business as usual. The holding of conferences, the election of bishops, the fund-raising drive for a new building or air-conditioner seems to be more important than the Blacks who are shot because they want to be men. The Black church, though spatially located in the community of the oppressed, has not responded to the needs of its people. It has, rather, drained the community, seeking to be more and more like the white church. Its ministers have condemned the helpless and have mimicked the values of whites. For this reason most Black Power people bypass the churches as irrelevant to their objectives.[12]

Ebony's February, 1975, issue tells a bit of the story of a venerable A.M.E.Z. prelate, William J. Walls. It is entitled "50 Years a Bishop" by Carlyle C. Douglas.

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10. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism,* p. 270.
11. *Black Christian Nationalism,* p. 237.
12. *Black Theology and Black Power,* p. 114.

Last year Walls wrote a prodigious 700-page book, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church.* Bishop Walls says of this monumental contribution to black religion:

> I did it to try and preserve Zion, but I ended up with a history of the race.[13]

> Because of his illustrious achievements, his wide travel and reading, his activist stance against racist attempts to deny him privileges accorded white Americans, one must honor Bishop Walls. I was particularly interested in his oblique comment on Black Theology. The bishop stated: 'The less we try to reduce Jesus Christ to a segregated level or try to color Him, the better off we'll be.'[14]

Does not this venerable churchman conclude, after some seventy years observing and participating in American religion, that segregation may be practiced here and there in a black church, but has been institutionalized in the white church as in every other American organization? As for "coloring the Christ," the European artist has been doing this for centuries. How often would one find in the Palestine of Christ's day a native with blue eyes, fair skin and flaxen hair?

As a pastor of a black church I sadly admit that, for the most part, the presidents of our conventions, the pastors of our churches, the laity therein in positions of power, think in the vein of white theology. When the New England Baptist Missionary Convention met at Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D. C. in June, 1962, one ministerial delegate made a motion "that we remain as we are." It has been ours too long to meet, greet, confer gratuitous doctorates on one another and pass innocuous resolutions that would not disturb the incumbent administration whether it be Democratic or Republican, Conservative or Moderate.

The Future

An assessment of black theology in mainline black churches is disappointing, to put it mildly. A cursory presentation reveals that it is supported minimally. One needs but to go to a ghetto black church of any denomination. The American flag will be prominently displayed at the altar. Where is the red, black and green flag symbolic of new black consciousness? If seen at all, it is as rare as a heat wave in Greenland. Don't anticipate pictures of saints with pigmentation in most black churches.

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13. Ebony, February, 1975, "50 Years a Bishop," p. 108.
14. *Ibid.*

The Ethiopian Christian Church, older than any in America and most in Europe, depicts all saints as black and all the devils as white. One's mind quickly pictures the fiery puritanical Black Muslims in modern America doing likewise.

Notwithstanding this pessimistic reality, I am sanguine about the future of black theology in the black church. Why do I feel this way?

First, it is the writer's conviction that black theology is of God. A person does not necessarily agree with every aspect of the fiery Cleage and incandescent Cone. There are black theologies by other men more acceptable to the present theological perspective of our black churchman. Major J. Jones, J. Deotis Roberts, Gayraud S. Wilmore write with varying emphases. Priscilla Mossie has edited the invaluable *Black Faith and Black Solidarity* even more recently.

A sterling scholar and theologian, Dr. William R. Jones of Yale, in turn, turns the light on inadequacies he perspicaciously detects in the militant theologies of Cleage and Jones as well as the more moderate irenic writings of Joseph Washington, J. D. Roberts and M. J. Jones. This is found in his mentally stimulating work, *Is God a White Racist?*

What has that to do with black theology being of God? Just this! From the most militant to the most moderate, all black theologians address themselves to justice, liberation and the infinite worth of the black man as a creation of God.

James H. Cone in *A Black Theology of Liberation* writes:

> The task of Christian theology is to analyze the meaning of hope in God in such a way that the oppressed community of a given society will risk all for earthly freedom, a freedom made possible in the resurrection of Christ. The language of theology challenges the societal structures because it is inseparable from the suffering community. . . . Whatever theology says about God and the world must arise out of its sole reason for existence as a discipline to assist the oppressed in their liberation.[15]

Judicious counsel from respected Gamaliel saved the bourgeoning Christian movement from persecution. He advised, referring to zealous Peter and John:

> Refrain from these men and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.—Acts 5:38-39.

It will be a long time before black theology will be accepted in most black churches. Nevertheless, there are some factors that will

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15. James H. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, pp. 21, 22.

crack monolithic opposition. Not the least of these is the interest by Continental theologians in the subject.

So many black artists have received increasing acclaim in America after acceptance in Europe. Among these are Roland Hayes, early twentieth-century concert tenor; Marian Anderson, whose rich contralto voice thrilled thousands; and Dean Dixon, who achieved fame as a symphonic conductor in Germany and Australia.

Only after her soulful renditions won her an enviable niche among European royalty and aristocracy did Americans of her own racial group give Mahalia Jackson considerable notice and appreciation. Could it be that this is the roundabout road to justifiable recognition for the small but doughty group of black religious leaders who pioneer in modern-day black theology?

By the same token, white American theologians will be hard pressed to dismiss, as of no consequence, what English, Dutch, German and Scandinavian theologians see merit in. This is bound to affect our leading seminaries—black and white. What established Continental religious scholars say is of major significance to their American colleagues.

As one black generation dies and another comes into being, the climate of black theology and liberation should be more favorable. Hopefully our black pulpits will recapture the mantle of a Nat Turner, a Martin Delany, a Henry H. Garnett, a Henry M. Turner, a Vernon Johns, a Mordecai Johnson and others. Major J. Jones suggests this likelihood in the dedication of his *Christian Ethics for Black Theology*:

> To the memory of my late parents, who gave me a deep sense of black religion and of the ethical. To my daughter, Chandra, sixteen, and to her dear friend, Muriel, fifteen, who will in the future live a fully recognized hope—a liberation and freedom for which black people of my generation can only hope and yearn.

Factors external to but impinging upon the black church force a more acceptable posture as relates to black theology. No less an authority than Gayraud S. Wilmore observes:

> It was the black folks of Watts, Newark, Detroit and hundreds of other communities across the nation and the young black radicals of the S.N.C.C. and the northern black nationalist groups—including the Nation of Islam—who convinced black preachers that the church was expendable if it was unwilling to immerse itself in the vortex of the Black Power movement. The Black Power motif was pregnant with moral and religious meaning,

and the black churchmen could not evade its magnetic force once the people took the cause of liberation into their own hands.[16]

So movements, individuals, youth and others are snapping at the heels of the black church, compelling the black church of tomorrow to a deeper consciousness of race and a more daring commitment to praying for the Kingdom to come, but also being co-workers with God in bringing the New Jerusalem to the ghetto.

To see a neatly dressed Muslim youth selling his papers or to see the attractive Crescent Stores dotting the areas where blacks are most densely concentrated, says something to the black church. Apartment houses freshly renovated speak a message of black pride and dignity and worth.

There is, I am sure, a remnant of blacks who are not concerned about who is with them as long as they believe themselves to be with God. Someone has said, "He is in the right who is most in league with the future." It is of such that James Cone writes in the closing chapter of *A Black Theology of Liberation*:

> Black Theology does not scorn Christian hope; it affirms it. It believes that when people really believe in the resurrection of Christ and take seriously the promise revealed through Him, they cannot be satisfied with the present world as it is. The past reality of the resurrection and the future of God disclosed through it make persons dissatisfied with the imperfection of the present. It is not possible to know what the world can and ought to be and still be content with excuses for the destruction of human beings. Christians must fight against evil, for not to fight, not to do everything they can for their brother's pain, is to deny the resurrection.[17]

There is hope for black theology in the black church where such a young person or older appears on the scene. Like Paul of old they have their heavenly vision and are restless until they execute it. They are people whom the world can not move. Consequently they alone are qualified to move their time and beyond.

Liberation theology, while not ubiquitous, will be spreading into more areas in the next decade. The January issue of the American Baptist Magazine focuses on the priorities of Asiatics in its readable article called "New Movements of Liberation." Dr. Ray Sano, Mills College Chaplain and head of the Asian Center for Theology and Strategies (ACTS), reminds us:

> America means salvation to our economic needs, but here we discover we are enslaved people and we need to set loose a liberation movement.[18]

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16. G. S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, p. 272.
17. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p. 248.
18. American Baptist Magazine, p. 10, January, 1975.

Not only the oppressed Asiatics but Africans are taking a look at theology. Says G. S. Wilmore in his brief narration of the consultation held in Ghana last December:

> A new beginning was being made for the black church in Africa and in America, and out of that new beginning there is certain to come in Desmond Tutus' words "a valuable contribution to the rich Christian heritage which belongs to all of us."[19]

So much for Asian, African and black theology of the U.S. The Latins of South America demand a new and better day, as is cogently expressed in Gustavo Gutierrez's well written book, *A Theology of Liberation.*

He does for Peru and Ruben Alves does for Brazil what black theologies are doing and will continue to do in the U. S. Black theologians have allies on different continents. Invincible indeed is an idea whose time has come. National consciousness comes to its own in Africa's elimination of class distinction, and centuries of oppression and poverty in South America provoke the quest and demand of theologians and Christian activists. In our own land, black theology frees the black man from self-hatred and dehumanization.

The black church in America wrought better than it realized in the years preceding the so-called emancipation under Lincoln. It kept hope alive. It never ceased to remind the slave that God had something better in the here and now. Might it not be called the one authentic Christian theology in this land, as Cone so often reminds us?

The voice was muted but not stilled in Reconstruction and well into the twentieth century. Social and political factors reduced the black to a pitiable status. At times "it was darker than a hundred midnights in a cypress swamp."

So many things have stirred something long dormant. African nations threw off the shackles of centuries-long inhumane colonialism, Martin L. King infused new dignity, manliness and spirit in the blacks of America; through him and like-minded martyrs they rediscovered a sense of worth.

The black church will have to make way for black theology. Its progress will not be uniform. It will encounter obstacles. Black and white foes will oppose it. As the Crusaders cried out centuries ago, "God wills it"; human agents must see it as the "heavenly vision" demanding their life commitment.

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19. Christian Century, February 19, 1975, p. 169.

Black Theology: Providence and Evil

by Henry James Young
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Interdenominational Theological Center

Is God active in the black man's quest for freedom and liberation? If so, then, in what sense? And, how can God's activity in black liberation speak, meaningfully, to the problem of black suffering? Traditionally black religionists have attempted to answer these questions from the perspective of divine coercion and omnipotence. The first task here is to show some of the difficulties and inadequacies with this model in attempting to answer these questions. The second task is to develop the model of divine persuasion as an alternative to divine coercion and omnipotence, and as a more viable theological model for speaking meaningfully about God's activity in black liberation and black suffering.

Providence refers to God's purpose and goal for man. It concerns itself with the way in which God attempts to accomplish His purpose in history. Because God traditionally is perceived as being intrinsically good and just, history has been interpreted as directed toward the good. The ultimate triumph of the good becomes assured because of divine omnipotence and coercion. This means that ultimately God breaks into history and coerces His purpose and goal into actualization. And, consequently, good becomes ultimately victorious over evil. In one sense, speaking from this traditional model, evil as an immediate tragedy becomes necessary in accomplishing God's final purpose and goal in history.

This theory of providence and evil, in large measure, comes from the Hegelian philosophical tradition. Hegel interpreted history as the unfolding of the Absolute Spirit (God). Thus, all history becomes the autobiography of God, and therefore all manifestations of God in history become necessary. Everything that occurs in history is a result of the direct plan of God. When evil occurs, from the human perspective it appears as bad, but from the divine perspective it works toward the ultimate plan of history and consequently becomes good. The Absolute Spirit of God, in His omni-

potence, governs or controls all history, making both good and bad acts of men necessary for the fulfillment of history. Hegel sees sin and moral evil as originally resulting from man's self-assertion of his freedom and independence. The Fall of man, therefore, becomes necessary due to his finitude. "Since this view explains sin as a necessity of man's nature which was created by God, it makes God responsible for it and absolves man himself from responsibility and guilt."[1]

Black theology must stand in opposition to the Hegelian idea of providence and evil because the latter can be used to justify and perpetuate oppression, slavery and man's inhumanity to man. It is in violation of the notion of free will that is so much a part of the Biblical tradition. From a Biblical perspective, man's Fall "was due not to a necessity of his nature but to a misuse of his freedom."[2] And to say that sin or moral evil is the result of man's misuse of his freedom makes him both guilty and responsible for his actions as opposed to making God responsible. Black theology, at this point, should stand with the Biblical tradition rather than the Hegelian tradition because to say that man is both guilty and responsible for his sins allows the black theologian to challenge the sin of oppression, slavery and man's inhumanity to man.

Theologically speaking though, the black community must be very careful about its theory of providence and evil, so as not to subscribe to a theory of providence and evil that both justifies and perpetuates the evil of oppression and slavery. During slavery, white slave masters attempted to indoctrinate the slaves in believing that the institution of slavery was ordained by God, and to fight against or oppose it was to go against the will of God. They used such scriptures as Romans 13:1-2:

> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
>
> Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The Bible was a very convenient tool for perpetuating the institution of slavery because of its many anti-black scriptural passages.[3]

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1. George F. Thomas, *Religious Philosophies of the West* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 284.

2. *Ibid.*

3. For a further elaboration of this see Charles B. Copher, "The Black Man in the Biblical World," *The Journal of The Interdenominational Theological Center* Vol. I, No. I, 1974, pp. 7-16 and Eulalia P. Baltazar, *The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973).

Unfortunately some of the slaves took this indoctrination that came from the oppressers very seriously and actually believed that their physical bondage was the result of God's providence. Frederick Douglas found this view of providence among many slaves. He speaks to it in the following manner:

> I have met many religious colored people, at the South, who are under the delusion that God requires them to submit to slavery, and to wear their chains with meekness and humility. I could entertain no such nonsense as this; and I almost lost my patience when I found any colored man weak enough to believe such stuff.[4]

It is clear that Frederick Douglas was opposed to the belief that slavery was the result of God's providence. And evidence seemed to support the view that most black Americans, both pre- and post-civil war, felt that slavery was not the result of God's providence, but rather, the result of the white man's cruelty, sin, injustice and inhumanity.

Believing that they were created in the image of God, the slaves felt that they were God's children. And, as I said earlier, although some succumbed to the slave masters' indoctrination that slavery was ordained by God, the dominant belief was to the contrary. This contrary belief was that God made of one blood all men and that it is not God's will that any man should keep another in bondage and captivity. This belief was grounded in the view that God's desire is that all men should be free. The same Bible which the slave masters used to validate slavery, once in the hands of the slaves, was used to condone their fight for freedom. They understood Christianity in light of this sense of freedom and liberty. With this new freedom consciousness the slaves felt that wilfully to submit to slavery meant to go against God's will, which was analogous to being non-Christian.

The slaves developed a theology of liberation and perceived God as being on their side. They believed that God was just and therefore on the side with justice, righteousness, freedom and good. They could no longer accept slavery because of its moral opposition to the law of God. Since they no longer accepted the white myth that God condoned slavery, disobedience and preservation through escape became prevalent. This becomes clear in the following words of an ex-slave:

> You charged me that in escaping I disobeyed God's law. NO indeed: that law which God wrote upon the table of my heart inspiring me to love

4. Quoted from Benjamin E. Mays, *The Negro's God* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 123.

> freedom, and impelling me to seek it at every hazard, I obeyed and, by the good hand of my God upon me, I walked out of the house of bondage.[5]

This theology of liberation emerges from the realization that slavery and injustice are diametrically opposed to the will of God. Thus it becomes clear at this point that the slaves' view of providence was not one of submission, but rather one of protest and rejection of slavery.

Along with this sense of protest and rejection was the belief, on the slaves' part, that God is a revengeful God. Because they were forced to conform to the conditions of slavery, the slaves believed that God was going to fight the oppressors for them. The slaves realized that they were powerless and the oppressors were powerful; the way in which they dealt with this problem was to say that God would fight their battles.

Along with this belief that God would fight their battles, the slaves held the view that slavery and oppression will be ultimately eradicated by God in history. This belief finds its grounding in divine omnipotence and sovereignty. It views God as being all-powerful and in complete control of history. It contends that good will ultimately triumph over evil because of God's plan and purpose for man. Black Americans have always used this sense of God's all-powerfulness to sustain them in the midst of their powerlessness. J. Deotis Roberts feels that this sense of the all-powerfulness of God is needed to inspire faith in the oppressed as he finds himself constantly under the sustained domination of the oppressor. He goes further to argue that this God is significant because He "is able to promise the ultimate vindication of the good and the defeat of evil and injustice."[6] Black Americans both historically and in present times have used the omnipotence of God as a means of protest against slavery, oppression, evil and man's inhumanity to man. Because of this belief in divine omnipotence, black Americans have contended that freedom is inevitable.

This optimistic sense of the inevitability of freedom comes out in the spiritual, "A Balm In Gilead," and it goes like this:

> There is a balm in Gilead
> To make the spirit whole;
> There is a balm in Gilead
> To heal the sin-sick soul.

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5. August Meier, ed., *The Making of Black America* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 195.

6. J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 87.

Sometimes I feel discouraged
And think my prayer is vain,
But then the Holy Spirit
Revives my soul again.

The basic insight of this spiritual is taken from the book of Jeremiah. It was the prophet Jeremiah who originally raised the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Jeremiah, at this point, is spiritually depressed, frustrated and discouraged. He has a spiritual dilemma; the slaves were able, with their creative imagination, to catch this spiritual dilemma, theologically, and develop a theory of providence. Encountering the cruelty, frustrations, and both physical and psychological oppressive forces of slavery, the black man "straightened the question mark in Jeremiah's sentence into an exclamation point: "There is a balm in Gilead!"[7] The basic insight here is one of optimism that grew out of the pessimism of slavery and transcended it. The slaves were able to take the pessimism of slavery and construct a sense of eschatological hope that ultimately perceived freedom as an inevitable reality. Although they were systematically dehumanized and oppressed, they never believed that the forces of evil would have the final word in reality. The theory of providence that they developed made them believe that ultimate defeat was unrealistic and impossible. This feeling was based on God's omnipotence and coercion.

If slavery had been accepted as an ever-unchanging reality, it is highly possible that the slaves would have perished on the plantation. But because they were able to cope with the contradiction between slavery and freedom, it enabled them to know that life in essence was not fixed. Because the slaves believed that the contradictions of life[8] were not ultimate, eschatologically speaking, they had a sense of optimism and hope in the midst of the pessimism of slavery. The pessimism of slavery and hopelessness comes out in the spiritual, "Sometimes I'm up and sometimes I'm down, Oh, yes, Lord; sometimes I'm almost to the ground, Oh, yes, Lord." The optimism of freedom and eschatological hope comes out in the spiritual, "I'm so glad that trouble don't last always."

When will the ultimate eradication of slavery, oppression and man's inhumanity to man come? The slaves perceived this in futuristic eschatological terms. They thought of it in terms of a futuristic consummation. This consummation of history had an

7. Howard Thurman, *Deep River* (New York: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1969), p. 56.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

apocalyptic element to it, meaning that it had a sense of divine destruction, judgment and victory to it. It was believed that at this time God would bring judgment and destruction upon the slave master; the slaves then would be vindicated. This vindication was perceived by the slaves as a state of reward and the destruction was thought of as punishment for the slave master. How did the slaves reason this out?

As they began to reason and think about the consummation as the abode of the righteous and hell as the abode of the unrighteous, they said, "I am having my hell now; when I die I shall have my heaven. The master is having his heaven now; when he dies he will have his hell."[9] And looking up to the big white house where the master lived, they said:

> But everybody talking 'bout heaven
> Ain't going there.[10]

Heaven to the slaves represented a time when there would be no more slavery, cruelty, evil and oppression. It represented the time when God would force man to conform to his will and purpose. The above spiritual is both a protest against and a victory over slavery. Although the slaves believed that complete victory over evil and slavery was going to eventuate beyond history, they also felt that their freedom was going to occur in this world. In other words, in terms of their destiny, they stood both within history and beyond history. They developed this double sense of destiny from the Christian tradition; Reinhold Niebuhr describes it in this fashion:

> It is only in terms of the Christian faith that an individual may stand both inside and outside of history. He stands inside because his faith affirms the meaningfulness of history and he stands outside because his faith asserts that history is borne by an eternal will.[11]

The Christian faith gave meaning and significance to the slaves.

The right of the slaves to govern and determine their own destiny was taken away by physical force, and therefore they were stripped of a sense of responsibility in this world. They were perceived by the slave master as objects, things or something of utility value. But from the eyes of God, they felt that they were somebody. Because they believed that history was borne by an eternal will, they were able to look for something better than their immediate

9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
11. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 70.

condition. It was in this sense that the slaves longed to go "home" or to "heaven." This notion comes out in the spiritual called "City Called Heaven" or "Po' Pilgrim":

I am a po' pilgrim of sorrow
Tossed out in this wide world alone;
No hope have I for tomorrow;
I started to make heaven my home.
Sometimes I am tossed and driven, Lord;
Sometimes I don't know where to roam.
I heard of a city called heaven;
I started to make it my home.

Therefore we can clearly see that the black man's conception of freedom and liberation was perceived historically in a two-fold eschatological perspective. It contained, as we have observed, both this-worldly and other-worldly dimensions. Thus God's providential plan, as they saw it, was for the black man to be free both in this world and in the world to come. Many of the spirituals can be interpreted in this light. This twofold meaning comes out in the spiritual,

O Canaan, sweet Canaan,
I am bound for the land of Canaan.

Frederick Douglas reveals the twofold meaning of this spiritual when he points out that it meant "something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the North, and the North was our Canaan."[12] Another spiritual that reveals this twofold meaning is,

I thought I heard them say
There were lions in the way;
I don't expect to stay
much longer here.
Run to Jesus, shun the danger.
I don't expect to stay
much longer here.

On the lips of some, this spiritual meant the expectation of a speedy summons to heaven, but on the lips of others it simply meant a speedy pilgrimage to a free state, and deliverance from all the evils and dangers of slavery.[13]

I have pointed out earlier that the black man believed that his freedom from slavery was inevitable because of God's omnipotence

12. Frederick Douglas, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas* (Canada: Collier-Macmillan, 1962), p. 159.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

and coercion. This notion comes into focus even more vividly in certain historical black religionists.

Nathaniel Paul, a pioneer abolitionist black preacher, argued that the providence of God in the affairs of this life was the antithesis of slavery and oppression. Because he believed that slavery was against God's providential plan, he contended that the black man's liberation from slavery was inevitable.[14] The conception of God that underlies Paul's notion of the inevitability of freedom is omnipotence and coercion. Daniel Alexander Payne, bishop of the A.M.E. Church, contended, "Trust in God, and he will bring slavery and all its outrages to an end."[15] Believing in the omnipotence of God, Payne felt that God had a set time when he would intervene and eradicate the evils of slavery. Thus all the black man had to do, according to Payne, was to trust in the almighty power of God. Richard Allen, "father, founder, and first bishop of the African Methodist Church,"[16] adhered to the traditional notion of divine omnipotence and coercion. He says, "Trust in God, who sees your condition, and as a merciful father pitieth his children, so doth God pity them that love Him." "This will," he continues, "promote your freedom."[17] Allen believed that if the slaves waited on God, He, in his omnipotence, would deliver them. David Walker, a pre-Civil War black abolitionist and nationalist, believed that the black man's freedom was inevitable because of God's almighty power and providential plan. He grounded his belief in the idea of God's justice. He asks, "Can the Americans escape God Almighty? If they do, can He be to us a God of justice? God is just, and I know it—for he has convinced me to my satisfaction—I cannot doubt him."[18] Walker believed that God Almighty in due time would pour out his vengeance upon Americans for their inhuman treatment of slaves.[19] Since, thus far, we have discussed historically the black man's conception of freedom in light of divine omnipotence and coercion, let us now critically reflect upon this theological model in light of divine persuasion.

First of all, what does divine persuasion mean and how does it differ from divine omnipotence? Divine persuasion means that God

14. Mays, *The Negro's God*, p. 42.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

18. See Walker's *Appeal* in Sterling Stuckey, ed., *Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 60.

19. Mays, *Negro's God*, p. 117.

influences man toward the good. God influences man by providing him with the best possibilities in the world for actualization. These possibilities are the paradigm both for the realization and the actualization of value in the world. They are inexhaustible in that man cannot exhaust the infinitude of these possibilities. As God provides these possibilities to man, it is up to man to accept or reject them.

Divine persuasive power differs from divine coercive power in that it does not force man in conformity to its control. Divine persuasive power does not force the outcome of a situation. The outcome of a situation is determined on the basis of the decision man makes in accepting or rejecting the ideal possibilities provided by God in his transcendent nature. Coercive power ultimately minimizes man's freedom and responsibility, whereas persuasive power maximizes man's freedom and responsibility.

Following this model of divine persuasion, we cannot say that the freedom of black Americans is inevitable.[20] It is not guaranteed. One of the difficulties with the notion of the inevitability of freedom is that it creates too much complacency and conservatism on the part of the black's stride for freedom and liberation. If God is going ultimately to break into history and force the black man's freedom and liberation, then why work for it? If God forces man into conformity to His will, it takes away man's freedom and responsibility. Traditionally, black Americans have said, man has freedom and responsibility up to a point, after which God takes control of the situation. Historically, as we have seen, this served as the black man's sense of hope, he believed that ultimately God in His omnipotence would intervene and eradicate the institution of slavery. Even today the black man continues to wait, eschatologically, for God's omnipotent intervention and eradication of oppression. As a result, black Americans have not utilized at the maximum capacity their physical, intellectual and spiritual facilities toward freedom and liberation.

Basic to this notion of the inevitability of freedom because of divine-omnipotence is the idea that God has a fixed time when He will eradicate oppression and evil. This fixed time is futuristic in its eschatological vision. From the perspective of divine persuasive power, there is no fixed eschatological consummation that God has planned for the elimination of black oppression. Divine persuasive

20. For a further elaboration see my discussion, "Black Theology and William R. Jones," Religion in Life, Spring, 1975, pp. 19-23.

power argues that the possibility for black liberation is dependent upon the black man's decision to make it a reality. God will not force it into actualization. The future becomes an open risk. If we accept God's ideal possibilities and employ them toward the eradication of our oppression, then the future becomes one of genuine opportunity. But, if we reject God's ideal possibilities and resort to complacency, indifference and false hope, then the future becomes a threat. Therefore the assurance of black liberation does not reside in an omnipotent God who will force it into actualization. Rather, it resides in the black man's existential decision to make it a reality.

God will be affected by whatever decision the black man makes, whether negative or positively. God will not make the right decision for us, He will influence us toward it. If the black man decides to accept God's ideal possibilities toward the actualization of freedom, God will be affected positively and consequently will celebrate the triumph of the good with us. If the black man rejects God's ideal and resorts to complacency, conservatism, and indifference, then God will be affected negatively. Faith in God, from this perspective, does not mean that He will force our liberation, but it means that, on the one hand, God influences us toward liberation, and, on the other hand, He participates in the actualization of this process.

To say that God participates in the actualization is not to say that He does it by force, but it means that God and man are interdependent. It refers to the immanence of God. In His transcendence God is beyond the world and contains all ideal possibilities for the world in his nature. These possibilities are complete, absolute, immutable, infinite, inexhaustible and eternal. When God in His transcendence provides these possibilities for man, in His immanence God participates in the actualization of these possibilities. Again, God does this by persuasion and not by coercion. All of the good that man actualizes in the world is conserved in God's immanence. This good, after it is actualized, becomes efficient data for the actualization of future possibilities.

Historically, all of the good that comes from the black experience is conserved in God's immanence. God uses this good to influence contemporary black Americans toward the actualization of their possibilities. If contemporary black Americans accept the possibilities provided by God's transcendence, and if we allow the good conserved in God's immanence to influence us toward the actualization of the good, the future becomes one of opportunity.

Toward a Black Christian Social Ethic

by Herbert O. Edwards
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Every new theological and ethical entry must make its way by pointing to the inadequacies, deficiencies and even errors implicit and explicit in the previous systems and approaches to the problem of trying to be faithful to the demands of the Gospel in a world which is "no friend of Grace."

In our racist society, the normal difficulties that new theological and ethical entries ordinarily encounter are exacerbated by the addition of the term "Black." For reasons which make sense only in a racist frame of reference, terms like Swedish Theology, German Theology, British Theology, Liberal Theology, Neo-orthodox Theology, Crisis Theology, Existentialist Theology, are all considered acceptable and, if attacked, are reproached for their substantive errors. But there is no problem with the name per se.

However, Black Theology is attacked because of the name. "There can be no such thing as Black Theology." One can expect, then, that any attempt to move toward a Black Christian Social Ethic would encounter the same kind of negative reaction. Consequently it is incumbent upon us to clear the decks by pointing up the inability of white American Protestant theological and social ethics to provide any meaningful guidelines for the black Christian who wants also to believe that he is not created for humiliation.

Every oppressive society precipitates rebellion and revolt. And the theological spokesmen of the establishment generally decry rebellion and revolt, as well as any action which threatens the existing order.

In revolting against oppression and enslavement, the slave is actually demanding rather than resisting order, for the oppressive system is not true order but systematized disorder. The revolt implies a demand that all recognize a common principle and a rejection of the disorder of a universe in which some have the rights of personhood while others are treated as objects.

It is not enough for the slave to know, in himself, that he has value and intrinsic worth, he knows that it is necessary that this value be recognized by others. Revolution, thus, is a demand for a mutual recognition of humanity. The master-slave relationship precludes the possibility of that mutual recognition. And the master-slave mentality, still so prevalent in almost all institutions in American life, also precludes that mutual recognition.

The slave tends to recognize the master without being recognized in turn. This is why slaves always know so much about masters, while masters know nothing about slaves. This is why, in American educational institutions which now admit black students, the black students, the descendants of slaves, are required to learn about the ways and the cultural traditions of the masters, but any suggestion that the cultural traditions and ways of the former slaves and their descendants be included in the curriculum creates literally a "crisis of conscience." To insist on mutual recognition of the common humanity of the slave is to invest him with a comparable humanity with the master and must be resisted.

The resistance which is offered to the demand to accord to the victims of oppression the same human status which the oppressor sees as his natural and ordained right is seldom justified by coming to grips with the basic, fundamental issue at conflict. Usually the demand is denied on other, more expedient, grounds. An instance which is representative is the response of Rachel Henderlite to the mounting opposition in the white South to the 1954 Supreme Court decision on education.

> Most of us know that to insist on recognition of human rights for all people as seems clearly a minimum requirement of Christian faith, and to insist on full integration of the Negro into American society all at one time, is to bring about bloodshed, elimination of the public schools, recriminations and hostilities of many kinds. This is obviously a situation in which to do what seems right is to bring about much that is wrong![1]

Establishment Ethics

White American Protestant theological ethics has been establishment-oriented in reference to its responses to the black presence in America. Indeed, one can probably show with little difficulty that it has been establishment-oriented in reference to a number of other issues as well, but our concern is with the kind of stances adopted toward black Americans. The following will serve to cast the issue in bold relief.

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1. "The Christian Way in Race Relations," Theology Today, Vol. XIV, No. 2, July 2, 1957, p. 196.

The racial stereotypes which were so much a part of white American thought in every discipline and in common usage, found their way into the writings of theological ethics. This stereotypical thinking is evidenced in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr, who, in 1932, commenting upon the Negroes' plight and advising a technique of non-payment of taxes, boycotts, etc., said:

"One waits for such a campaign with all the more reason and hope because the *peculiar spiritual gifts of the Negro* endow him with the capacity to conduct it successfully."[2]

Paul Ramsey also falls victim to stereotypical thinking in regard to the black presence in America. He says, ". . . If there are in the south 'darkies' or 'mammies' who themselves think that the conditions, e.g., of public education, ought not to be the same for all, we may say with definiteness that they ought not to think so."[3]

Stereotypical thinking which is racist-informed comes through in other ways. The reactions of white theologians and ethicists to the Civil War, Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction period which ushered in, with a vengeance, the age of legal separation, capped by the 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision, clearly reveal the impact of racist historiography upon establishment ethics.

According to Niebuhr: "William Lloyd Garrison solidified the south in support of slavery by the vehemence of his attacks against slave-owners. Many of them were, within the terms of their inherited prejudices and traditions, *good men*; and the violence of Mr. Garrison's attack upon them was felt by many to be an evidence of moral perversity in him."[4] The Abolitionists are often accused of precipitating the Civil War by their idealistic and unrealistic stance toward slavery.

The responses to Abraham Lincoln are also further evidences of the one-sided reading and re-writing of history required by establishment ethics. Lincoln is often spoken of as a great nineteenth-century theologian. John Bennett said: "Lincoln expressed essential elements of Biblical religion though he did not use the Christian symbols which would be divisive in our pluralistic society. He humbled himself before the sovereignty of God as the transcendent God of history, as the God of righteousness and mercy."[5]

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2. *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 254 (italics added).
3. *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 334.
4. Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-49 (italics added).
5. *Christians and the State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 8.

The fact that Lincoln was a racist created no problem for white ethicists. Indeed, one of Reinhold Niebuhr's last articles defended Lincoln against the charge. ("The Negro Minority and Its Fate in A Self Righteous Nation."[6]) It seems that Lincoln's own words are ignored. He stated on more than one occasion:

> I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people.[7]

In commenting on the mistake made by President Eisenhower in letting himself be "forced" into sending troops into Little Rock, Niebuhr said:

> The President was right in insisting that the majesty of the law must be upheld when it is threatened by mob violence. But even a northern liberal must agree with the *people of the South* in a distaste for the use of Federal troops in domestic situations. It reminds the *South* of *dreaded Reconstruction* days.[8]

The "majesty of law" *qua* law must be upheld against mob violence, but force must not be used to enforce the desegregation decrees or to protect black citizens in the exercise of their rights. The use of Federal troops reminded the *white people of the South* of 'dreaded Reconstruction days'! Why were the Reconstruction days so dreadful? Was it because Federal troops were used to protect former black slaves in their recently acquired freedom?

Niebuhr continued: "Unfortunately the troops may have also done much to harden the hearts of the racists. This proves that the President was probably more right in July, when he said that he could not imagine a situation which would prompt him to use Federal troops, than he was in September when he was prompted to use them."[9]

Professors Beach and Bennett were one with Niebuhr in interpreting the Reconstruction and "separate but equal" period from a totally white perspective. Professor Beach pointed out that:

> With the master-slave community smashed by the Civil War, the Reconstruction era saw the slow development of segregation in Southern

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6. McCormick Quarterly, Vol. XXII, No. 4, May, 1969, pp. 201-210.

7. Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait Through His Speeches and Writings* (New York: New American Library), p. 106.

8. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Bad Days at Little Rock," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XVII, No. 17, October 14, 1957, p. 131 (italics added).

9. *Ibid.*

> custom and law. At its best, this legislation represented a *feasible transitional arrangement*, which, in theory at least, by substituting a wall for the ceiling of slavery, *proposed to lift all restrictions* upon Negro development and enable both Negro and white to achieve peace and concord by *separation and mutual respect*. . . . By the process which corrupts even good *custom* and the idolization of an ephemeral institution, this *segregation which was partially redemptive* has now become the enemy of Christian community, the occasion for the sin of inhumanity of man to man, and the judgment of God.[10]

The re-writing of American history from a white perspective leads one down some strange and tortuous paths of reasoning. The clear object and intent of the brutality inflicted upon the black communities across the South was to take black Americans out of the political process which they had entered in significant numbers during the Reconstruction Era.

The developing and "partially redemptive" good custom of segregation was a clear attempt not to provide for a transitional period of separate and mutual respect and development; it was to devise and maintain an acceptable substitute to the master-slave relationship which would keep it intact in all but name.

In a response to the Supreme Court decision of 1954 Professor Bennett commented: "The reasons given for the decision are a sound interpretation of the results of a long experiment in race relations, an experiment with the 'separate but equal' approach to the problem.[11]

Professor Bennett's interpretation of the 'separate but equal' *experiment* in race relations, although totally inconsistent with the historical facts (it was no more an experiment in race relations than was slavery), was consistent with his interpretation of the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision.

> The 'separate but equal' formula was *right* in an earlier period. Not only did it represent *a great advance toward justice;* but, also movement along the lines laid down by it was necessary if the present step was to be taken without disaster. If there had not been the development of equality in many respects in parts of the South, the integration of the schools would be too difficult to attempt at this stage.[12]

Niebuhr was also prompted to compare the 1954 and the 1896 court decisions.

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10. Waldo Beach, "A Theological Analysis of Race Relations," in Paul Ramsey, ed., *Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 220 (italics added).

11. John C. Bennett, "Editorial Notes," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XIV, No. 8, May 17, 1954, p. 59.

12. John C. Bennett, "A Clear and Noble Decision," Christianity and Society, Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring, 1954, p. 3 (italics added).

> In 1896, the Supreme Court tried to ease the hiatus between the ideal and the social realities by its doctrine of "separate but equal" rights before the law. *It was a very good doctrine for its day;* for we must remember that the present Supreme Court decision would, at the beginning of the century, merely have prompted revolt. And revolt which is so widespread that police power cannot suppress it represents the defeat both of the law and the ideal.[13]

Niebuhr was quite right in being sensitive to the ways in which the reading of the present situation can affect decisions, judicial or otherwise. In fact, changing historical circumstances, in reference to the black presence in America, might partly account for the shifting ethical positions taken by white ethicists and for the fact that, in spite of different methodological approaches and/or theology, they are generally in agreement in regard to the black presence.

In 1950, writing before the Civil Rights Movement really began to gain momentum, Paul Ramsey had this to say about the Christian's response to social change: "Even the humblest man must rapidly become willing to have the structure and customs of his world otherwise than they now are. . . ."[14]

However the racial situation had changed by 1961. Ramsey wrote the only full-length analysis of the black protest against racial discrimination in the light of Christian ethics. The general tone of this work reflects the changing responses of black Americans to the embodiment of racism in law and custom. The clearly expressed fear is that black Americans will assume that racist practices are sufficient justification for radically changing the social structures. Respect for law and order must be maintained. The Christian victim of injustice must learn not only patience, but also the restraining discipline of refusing to exercise a right if to do so will threaten to destroy the "garments of skin" with which God by His own hands has clothed naked human relations.

Christian realism supports law and the established order unless and until some better "garment" can be woven without letting worse befall.[15] ". . . In the Christian view, *simple and not so simple injustice* alone has never been a sufficient justification for revolutionary change. There is always also the question of order to be considered, and a need for restraints placed upon all and upon the

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13. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Supreme Court on Segregation in the Schools," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XIX, No. 10, June 14, 1954, p. 75 (italics added).

14. *Basic Christian Ethics, op. cit.,* p. 48.

15. Paul Ramsey, Christian Ethics and the Sit-In (New York: Association Press, 1961), p. 48.

injustice infecting even our claims for greater justice."[16]

The Civil Rights movement came to be viewed as a threat to order and the majesty of law. Their insistence that the law should be enforced led to criticisms based on the "limits of law." Stateways cannot change folkways. To enforce the law would seem to be the right thing to do, but to use "force" to do so would be wrong. According to Niebuhr, "These cases of nullification will in due time be brought before federal courts and if force is not used, as it must not be used to enforce the Court's decision, we may expect a large scale pattern of nullification."[17]

Force must not be used! Indeed, one may question the use of the word "enforcement," according to F. Ernest Johnson, "with reference to any statute or legal principle that applies to entrenched custom and deep-seated attitudes."[18] One of the ways to avoid the use of force was to insist, with Niebuhr, that ". . . Negroes will have to exercise patience and be sustained by a robust faith that history will gradually fulfill the logic of justice."[19]

The impatience of black people, coupled with the growing recalcitrance of whites, led to establishment ethics beginning to increase its criticism of the former out of fear for the unity of the country, which was threatened by the latter.

James Sellers distinguished between the sit-in movements of 1960 and the Freedom Rides of 1961. He suggested that the major difference between the two was in tone. The sit-in movement couples economic withdrawal with moral protest, essentially by young Negroes living in the community. However, in contrast, the Freedom Rider's methods involved neither economic withdrawal nor local protest, but depended instead on positive imposition, often over long distances, into a situation. "To say the least, this shift takes away some of the *gentility and humility* that had characterized the earlier movements."[20]

The Freedom Riders, lacking the "gentility and humility" of the sit-inners, showed a lack of respect for the processes of orderly change.

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 49 (italics added).

17. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Schools, Church, and the Ordeals of Integration," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XVI, No. 16, October 1, 1956, p. 121.

18. F. Ernest Johnson, "The Long Road to Desegregation," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XVI, No. 22, December 24, 1956, p. 175.

19. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Civil Rights and Democracy," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XVII, No. 12, July 8, 1957, p. 89.

20. James E. Sellers, "Love, Justice, and the Non-Violent Movement," Theology Today, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, January, 1962, p. 430 (italics added).

> . . . the obligation to respect laws *that may be* 'unjust' has probably not been explored sufficiently by either the non-violent leaders or the neo-confederates. A way could be found, I would suggest, by which the testing of a law by deliberate violation could be combined with greater over-all respect for the processes of orderly change (legislation and litigation) than was apparent, for example, in the 'Freedom Rides' of 1961.[21]

The insistent and persistent demands for justice led establishment ethics to a support of order as such. In 1965 Paul Ramsey's comments on the Civil Rights Movement clearly reveal how the villains and victims in the drama have changed roles.

> Order is a good in itself, in that the orders provide the fabric in which men may dwell . . . Habits of upheaval and disobedience to law on *one's own determination* that it is unjust are not easily slacked.[22]

The Civil Rights Movement was not attacking "order" as such; it was attacking unjust orders. Neither did the participants determine, on their own, that racially discriminatory laws were unjust. Ramsey himself said, in 1950: "Discriminatory legislation in general, however, is wrong even if the whole group discriminated against votes for it."[23]

The situation in 1965, however, causes Ramsey to conclude: ". . . from the beginning of the Civil Rights movement in the United States the duty of compliance with law has been vastly underestimated by many of the leaders of Christian opinion and action."[24]

In responses to the black presence and the Civil Rights movement, establishment ethics clearly reveal the tendency which John Bennett warned against in 1958:

> There is always a tendency for both moral and legal thinking to become crystallized around the institutions of a society in a particular period or the interests of a particular dominant social group. Moral or legal norms, believed to be absolute, usually reflect those institutions and interests and need to be continually criticized and purged in the light of new situations, of new needs, or of new awareness of old needs.[25]

The inadequacies, deficiencies and errors in white establishment ethics in regard to the oppression faced by the black Christian in

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21. James Sellers, *The South and Christian Ethics* (New York: Association Press, 1962), fn. #13, p. 189 (italics added). Cf. Waldo Beach, "The Sit-Down Boycott," Christianity and Crisis, Vol. XX, No. 4, March 21, 1960, p. 27.

22. *Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 116 (italics added).

23. *Basic Christian Ethics, op. cit.*, p. 334.

24. *Deeds and Rules, op. cit.*, p. 117.

25. Bennett, *Christians and the State, op. cit.*, p. 16.

America should now be clear. If space permitted, attention could be called to the attempts to read the concept of race as experienced in America back into the mind of God; attention could be called to the willingness to ask black Americans to accept something called "good race relations" in lieu of human and legal rights.

Attention could be called to the attempt to make appeals to "original sin" to explain and, in part, justify, white racism; one could lay bare the attempts to place "racial justice," "racial brotherhood," "racial integration in the churches" in an eschatological, ideal realm, thus absolving white Christians of any responsibility for their failure to achieve or permit these conditions to be realized in this "fallen world."

One could call attention to the general inability to recognize the humanity of black people because they were viewed as "problems" for white Christians, and to the complete absence of any guiding word to black Christians in their struggle to achieve a just society except that they should be patient. However, it seems that enough has been said to justify the need for Black Christian Social Ethics.

We therefore close this section with a 1959 and a 1965 quote from Reinhold Niebuhr, who in the former statement fails to tell the truth about America, and in the latter one perhaps explains why the former is less than true.

> In America our treatment of the Negroes is based upon the national presupposition that they will be *fully incorporated into the national community*.[26]
>
> It must have been as difficult for the civilized Romans to discover a common humanity with the barbarian European hordes who overran the empire as for modern white oligarchies in Africa and America to recognize that cultural differences between Negro and white groups are not innate but historically contingent.[27]

Black Christian Social Ethics: A Working Definition

By the term Black Christian Social Ethics we mean to designate and develop an academic discipline which is at once descriptive and normative, reflective and action-oriented. This discipline should be rooted in selective categories of the black Christian tradition, the Biblical revelation interpreted from a black perspective,

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26. *The Structure of Nations and Empires* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 214 (italics added).

27. *Man's Nature and His Communities* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 95.

and the existential conditions of black life in the contemporary social, economic and political arena. It should seek to explicate and make operational in behavioral and public policy terms the practical implications of Black Theology for black liberation from racism and oppression. It should seek to develop norms for the ethical valuation of black reality and strategies for orienting the action of black individuals and communities—particularly the church—toward the eradication of the misery, powerlessness, exploitation and oppression experienced by people of African descent everywhere in the world.

BLACK Christian Social Ethics

There is an historic community of color in all Western societies. The segregation, exploitation and oppression of this community is related to the African slave trade and the colonization of non-white peoples by the Christian nations of Europe and America.

We speak of blackness ontologically and ideologically. To be black, ontologically speaking, is to be a part of this community of color—a community of people who, because of their color, have been despised, humiliated, exploited and rejected by white people who themselves have imputed ultimate meaning to skin color and physiognomy. In Western societies color symbolism is a part of ultimate reality.

To be black, ideologically speaking, is to be engaged in a conscious, deliberate struggle against the suffering, misery and oppression which this community of color has experienced, mainly at the hands of white people.

Black *CHRISTIAN* Social Ethics

To be Christian in this context means to cling to the faith and hope that the ultimate answer to white racism and black oppression lies in the significance and implications of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Liberator. It is to be dissatisfied with the conditions under which black people are forced to live because we believe that God has affirmed our black humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ, and that in that same Christ he has come to set all oppressed people free. To be Christian is to enter into that struggle for liberation in continuation of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth who said: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . because he has anointed me . . . to set the captives free." We understand the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ as his action

in history for the liberation of the oppressed and the humanization of the existence of every person, of every race and every nation.

Black Christian *SOCIAL* Ethics

By *social* we imply an orientation of analysis and action. It is to be aware of the interrelated character of human action; to be sensitive to community and to the lack of community; to be cognizant of the barriers which preclude free, truthful and effective communication between persons and between institutions. In ethical reflection it is to recognize the sociological as well as the theological character of the church and to affirm the importance of those communities in which people find themselves and apart from which they cannot be free human beings.

Black Christian Social *ETHICS*

To do ethics is to come to grips with values and disvalues in human relations in accordance with the need for goodness and righteousness in the life of persons and institutions. It is to analyze and reconstruct the *is* in the light of the *ought*. To do ethics in a black context is to seek to tell the truth about the situation of black people *vis-a-vis* the structures of oppression and exploitation—particularly about institutions in society, religious and non-religious, and their positive or negative relationship to black liberation. Further, to do ethics in this sense is to develop a value system, adequate to the prevailing ethos and styles of black behavior and adequate, at the same time, to the deepest insights of the Christian faith—as a guide to effective social action in the struggle for humanization and liberation. To do *Black Christian Social Ethics* is to analyze and actively respond to the black situation in the light of Biblical, theological and sociological interpretations of the liberating acts of God, taking into account previous assumptions and presuppositions of those who have sat and sit where the oppressors sit, and those who have sat and sit with the oppressed.

The sources and norms of Black Christian Social Ethics are, therefore, Biblical, theological and sociological—broadly understood. By sources we mean the relevant data for the ethical task; by norms we mean how that data is to be used. The norms of Black Christian Social Ethics arise from two aspects of a single reality: the liberation of black people and the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Liberator.

The starting point for Black Christian Social Ethics is the black community in which we find Christ, manifested in the lives of the people of the ghetto, making decisions about white and black existence and white and black liberation. Analysis must not only contain normative statements. It must lead to a rational and systematic explication of the operational significance of those statements. From analysis we seek to move toward an evaluation of the situation inclusive of the resources available for change and the demands of the Gospel for making free persons. Evaluation leads inevitably toward the spreading of the consequentialist net, the assessment of alternative modes of response to the situation in the light of the requirements of justice and freedom. We are then free via the Gospel to relativise our institutional loyalties, particularly the loyalties presumed by a racist church and state, in such a way that we can work for the possible alteration and/or destruction of every institution and pattern of life which is inimical to the freedom of black people and all other oppressed peoples.

Black Liberation, Christian Education and Black Social Indicators

by Grant S. Shockley
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Increasingly, there is agreement among, and often between, black theologians and Christian educators that a basic and fundamental purpose of education in the black church is the liberation of oppressed black people (and any other people) in the black community. William Jones refers to this in theological terms as "committed" or "engaged" theology.[1] In educational terms, Christian educators refer to it as "praxiological" church education, which for Paulo Freire and others is an engagement of the realities of the historical situation in and through the learning process and "teaching" commitment to act in relation to those realities to the end that they become humanized and humanizing.[2]

The purpose of this paper is to re-focus the educational task of the black church. Through the use of "indicators" it will attempt to demonstrate how black churches can narrow the discrepancy between the "soft data" or rhetoric of much of black liberation theology and the "hard data" or performance that is needed in the black community through a black church ministry of advocacy and action.

With this purpose in mind, the objectives of the paper are three: (1) to examine selected statistical data related to the black condition and the need for black liberation; (2) to evaluate this data in relation to what selected black churches affirm to be their mission; (3) to suggest a set of "black church indicators" that may be used to measure, evaluate and guide black churches in understanding, initiating, interpreting and educating for effective, praxis-oriented liberation.

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1. cf. William R. Jones, "Toward an Interim Assessment of Black Theology," Reflection, Vol. 69, No. 2, January, 1972, p. 1.

2. cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).

It has been indicated that an "indicator" system approach would be used in developing this paper.[3] Such an approach was selected because it seems to provide a highly expeditious way of assembling, integrating and interpreting data. It also affords a frame of reference for the development of criteria that can articulate the "quality" as well as the "quantity" of information. Following this introduction, the paper will divide into three sections: (1) black liberation indicators; (2) black religious indicators and educational planning in black churches; (3) a concluding and summarizing statement.

1. Liberation Indicators

The Black Experience

Many, if not most black churches in black communities lack both the quantity and quality of data that is needed to accomplish meaningful planning, to do productive decision-making or to effect systemic change.

For the black church especially, such planning must begin with a realistic comprehension of the context of black church life in America. That context is the "black experience"—the life and world of any and all "people of color" in America who must (or will) identify themselves as being of African descent. This arbitrarily defined and usually spatially confined "black world," viz., the black "ghetto," is a primal experience for black people. It affects black people in a way that no other racial experience affects any other minority. The "black experience" is the ever present reality of knowing, feeling and living as a non-white in white-oriented society. It is the black group experience, historic and present, of being oppressed, disdained, deprived, excluded, and neglected.

While occasionally circumstances have been such that some few black people have been able to escape some of the worst of the brutalizing experiences that are common to being black in America, essentially, for all black people, the "black experience" is a matter of degree rather than kind in terms of negative attitudes and treatment from white or white-oriented persons and institutions.

These perceptions of black people by whites as being infra-human and inferior have caused our nation from its inception to

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3. cf. Lyle E. Schaller, "Where Are Our Ecclesiastical Indicators" Religion in Life (Autumn, 1971).

move ". . . toward two societies, one black and one white, separate and unequal."

It is actually this *white* separatism, subtle and overt, ubiquitous and endemic, that prescribes "racial" boundaries for living, learning, loving, working and even dying. All of this is the "black experience."

The Black Revolution

A recent event in the "black experience" that has effected a fundamental change in the direction of thought and action in the black community is the Black Revolution.

Beginning in 1966 the Civil Rights movement took a new direction. Black people began to define themselves and rejected white (or more precisely non-black) definitions of themselves. The protest approach of the late 1950's and the early 1960's had become pressurized. Confrontation replaced conciliation. Black pride, black integrity and black self-determination became "values" in many previously externally white-dominated black communities.

Under the leadership of men such as Joseph R. Washington, James H. Cone, Albert B. Cleage, Vincent Harding, Deotis Roberts, Major J. Jones and others, theology, Christology and ecclesiology were rethought, revalued and restructured. Black theology emerged as a rationale for the liberation of the black oppressed in the black community. In Cone's words, "it is thus incumbent upon us as black people to become revolutionaries for blackness, rebelling against all who enslave us."

The Black Revolution was an indication of the indictment of white America by black "denizens" who, in the words of C. Eric Lincoln, had committed themselves to a new and audacious objective; namely, "the substitution of a new system for one adjudged to be corrupt, rather than corrective . . ."

Summarily, there emerged in the late 1960's in the black community a new leadership segment whose avowed purpose was to achieve for themselves, i.e., black people (and all minority peoples), the rights and options of the society and its economy which are open to white people as a matter of course.

The crucial significance of the Black Revolution was its articulation of the basic problem of black people in this country—powerlessness. As a color minority and a numerical minority we are politically, socially, economically, educationally and legally impotent!

The Black Ghetto

The locus of major social indicators of change for black church-oriented religion is the black ghetto, involuntarily segregated black urban areas often characterized by poor housing, poverty, sub-standard schools and other signs of acute social disorganization.

These black communities are the settings for the black experience. Generally they are where black people must live and learn, love and play. The black ghetto is plural, not singular, however. It is the foul-smelling slum of the central city, the "nigger" side of town in the rural areas, or the "posh" black ghetto of suburbia. Regardless of its location it is a visible symbol of white negative attitudes toward black people. It is, as Kenneth B. Clark so aptly describes it, like an invisible wall erected ". . . by the white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness."[4]

Again in the words of C. Eric Lincoln, the worst aspect of the white-fabricated ghetto ". . . is that the same sentiments that cause whites to consider the black ghetto a proper residential reservation for blacks compel whites to conceive and enforce reservations in other fields also—employment, education, religious life and the administration of justice."[5]

In view of the cruciality of understanding in the black ghetto and its challenge to black urban church-oriented religion the remainder of this section of the paper will present data about five measurable trends in the black ghetto: (1) demographic; (2) environmental; (3) economic; (4) civil rights; (5) cultural; these are pertinent for the stated goals of the Black Revolution. The purpose will be to probe the meaning and direction of such trends and, hopefully, to forecast their rate of change and implications for the planning and educational process in black churches.

2. Demographic Indicators

Population

The 1960 census enumerated 18.8 million black people in America. The 1970 statistic is 22.6 million. This figure (10.8 million males and 11.8 million females) comprises an 11.1 per cent block of the total American population, an estimated 204 plus million. It also represents a 20 percent increase since 1960.

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4. Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power.* (New York and Evanston, Ill., 1965, p. 11).

5. C. Eric Lincoln, "The Black Revolution in Cultural Perspective," Union Seminary Quarterly Review (Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring, 1968), p. 22.

While the number of black people who live in the southern states has declined rather steadily since World War II, more than half (52 per cent) still live there; 40 per cent reside in the North and 8 per cent in the West. A significant demographic indicator in the current census pertaining to the black population is the fact that practically all of its increase has been in the central or inner cities of the metropolitan areas. The total increase in these areas by 1970 was 3.8 million, the black increase 3.3 million.

Income

According to a joint study report by the U. S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1970), black income levels have continued to lag behind white. The median income for non-white* families rose 102 per cent in the 1960-1970 decade to $6,516. The median income for white families during the same period rose 75 per cent to $10,236. The "indicator" here is the fact that the dollar gap between black and white family incomes actually increased. In 1960 the black median income was $2,602 less than the white, and even though it rose more percentage wise during the decade it was still $3,720 less than the white median income in 1970. The black "increase" statistic had been measured against a smaller base figure thus giving a misleading indicator.

Another way of stating this is to say that although blacks were nearly 11 per cent of the population in 1970 they were 30 per cent of those who were below the poverty income level.

Family

The black family statistic for the decade 1960-1970 is a mixed report. The average black family in America has more education, more earning power, better housing and fewer children than ten to twenty years ago. Also, contrary to much "opinion," 75 per cent of all black families *are* headed by visible males.

The negative side of the situation reveals the facts that: (1) black family incomes are 50 per cent lower than white, and the gap is widening; (2) an increasing number of black (and white) women family heads are separated or divorced; (3) most of the poor black

*In this paper, when speaking in statistical terms, "black" or "Negro" will be used interchangeably with non-white. Actually, most non-whites in America are "black" ". . . (the percentage varying from 96% in the 1950 census to 93% in the 1960 census)," cf. "Negro Population Growth and Distribution," *The Negro Almanac,* H. A. Ploski and Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. eds. (New York: Bellwether, 1966), p. 217.

children are in broken homes; (4) the mortality rates for black infants and mothers are much higher than for whites.

The statistical indicator of significance here is the fact that the poor black family living in the ghetto, very often a "broken" family, has made virtually no income gain in the last decade.

3. Environmental Indicators

Poverty

The poverty statistics based on a 1969 non-farm family income of $3,745 or less found more in this category generally (black and white) than in the 1960's. Out of a total of 25 million poor (more than 5 million families), seven million or approximately one-third were black: specifically, blacks were 29 per cent of the poor in 1960; in 1970 they were 31 per cent.

During 1959-1969 other statistics about blacks and poverty developed. Only a few blacks (or whites) in the poverty class received public assistance. A larger number of poor black families than white have children under 18 years of age. Black poverty is found in concentrated masses in the urban areas *but is more prevalent in the rural sections of the nation.*

A major contributing factor to poverty among blacks, especially in the South, is a low basic education profile. Though only 20 per cent of the region's population, they contribute to more than 50 per cent of its illiteracy.

Housing

The housing situation profile for blacks, the key to school, recreation and community facilities, is poor and worsening. Black home ownership increased during 1960-1970 from 38 to 42 per cent but this figure refers to a minority among millions of blacks facing the housing question. Housing for blacks in rural areas is more substandard than it is in the urban slum. Here almost half (41 per cent) of all black dwelling units lacked adequate sanitary plumbing. By 1970 this percentage had decreased to 17 per cent.

Sub-standard housing costs more to blacks in the inner city than to whites. Even though black families may have comparable incomes to whites they are confined in their choice of housing opportunities.

With projection that between 1970 and 1980 blacks will increasingly occupy the central cities of America, plus the fact that pres-

ently two-fifths of the housing is sub-standard and the supply of any kind limited, the outlook is very poor for equality in this area.

Health

Adequate health care for the poor in black communities is usually costly, unavailable or inaccessible. Among the reasons for this situation still (the 1970's) are discrimination, neglect, inadequate health education and lack of professional personnel. For 1967 the black-white health problem-area ratios per 100,000 of the population were as follows: tuberculosis cases, 65.1—15.3; maternal mortality, 37.5—19.7; infant mortality (first 28 days), 25—15; (first year), 12.5—4.7; life expectancy, 61.6—71.3. Twenty per cent or more of black children fail to get the standard protective shots against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, while 91.4 per cent of white children receive them.

The major indicator here seems to be the fact that "industrialized" health care systems are increasingly available only on a purchasing power basis and thus "least available to those who need them most."

Education

The statistic for education in the black community is at best precarious. While it shows signs of advance, its relative gains are small and its problems increasing.

Only 58 per cent of black grade school children complete the eighth grade versus 73 per cent for whites; approximately 40 per cent of black high school students graduate versus 62 per cent for whites; black college enrollment has practically doubled since 1964, *but* the relative percentage has not changed appreciably, i.e., less than 7 per cent of all college graduates were black in 1970 compared with 5 per cent in 1964; in graduate school approximately 1 per cent are black.

A significant indicator here is the fact that *increased education does not necessarily mean increased earning capacity for blacks* as a whole, and at each level, blacks have less income than whites.

4. Economic Indicators

Consumership

The buying habits and power of black Americans during 1969 are indicative of several things about the black condition and future than would first seem apparent.

In 1969 black America's 22,727,000 people spent more than 35 billion dollars for goods and services. This sum is a little less than the Gross National Product of Canada.

Generally speaking, urban families (black and white), in the same income bracket have similar spending habits. Black families, however, spend proportionately more on basic items (food, shelter, utilities, clothing). In other areas, e.g., savings, debt, home and automobile ownership, differences appear. Blacks with low income have less debt than whites. Middle income blacks save more than middle income whites. Fewer blacks than whites buy cars or own homes.

The indicator here is precarious consumer credit, its high cost and scarce availability, especially in the area of housing.

Employment/Unemployment

There seems to have been some movement toward better positions and jobs for blacks in the labor market during the 1960-1970 decade. Professionals (including technicals) increased from 5 to 9 per cent; proprietors and managers from 3 to 4 per cent; clerical workers, 7 to 13 per cent; sales workers, 1 to 2 per cent; craftsmen and foremen, 6 to 8 per cent; semi-skilled workers, 14 to 10 per cent (decrease); household help, 14 to 8 per cent (decrease); and farm workers, 12 to 4 per cent (large decrease); other service workers remained the same, 18 per cent.

The indicators in this situation are not the fairly high increases in upgrading but the still relatively few blacks in these categories and the low base on which the increases had to be computed. Generally the situation is that (1) blacks have the lower paying jobs; (2) blacks receive less pay for the same education; (3) blacks produce too few college graduates; and (4) the black unemployment rate is high.

Youth

A recent (1969) United States Census Bureau Survey revealed that proportionately more blacks than whites belong in the youth category. The median age for white youth is 29 and for black 21. There are also proportionately more black males than white males between the ages of 5 and 19. Black females form a larger per cent (31) of the total 5-19 age category than do whites (28 per cent).

This demographic situation highlights several problems for the black community: (1) generally youth have the highest unemploy-

ment rate; (2) black youth unemployment rates (16-17 year old) exceed those of whites by 27.8 per cent to 15.7; (3) black youth, experiencing cumulative frustration from past lack of job opportunities, drop out of the labor market sooner than whites, and thus their unemployment rate is even higher but invisible; (4) the unemployment rate for young blacks in the inner cities often exceeds 30 per cent. Figures for black veterans, though not available, have been estimated to be only slightly less than double the general rate for veterans as a whole.

This increasing black population of young men and young women comprise the most angry, militant and frustrated youth generation in history.

5. Civil Rights Indicators

Educational Justice

Variously determined definitions of a "desegregated" and/or an "integrated" school and the lack of precise data present a somewhat unclear picture of racial integration in the public schools during 1960-1970. Generally, statistically meaningful integration is yet to be achieved.

A Time magazine report claims that 40 per cent of all black children in the South attended somewhat integrated schools in 1970. In 1964 the percentage was one per cent. Health, Education and Welfare figures show that black pupil attendance in white schools across the South for 1967-1968 was 14 per cent. This rose to 20 per cent in 1968-1969. In terms of states the range was from 38.9 in Texas to 6.1 in Mississippi.

Nationally the integration statistic is low. Seventy-five per cent of all Southern black children attend schools that are predominately (95 per cent) black. Outside of the South (North and West) in 1969, "a survey of 75 cities revealed that three out of four black elementary pupils attend schools that are 90 per cent or more Negro."

National statistics are not available but all indicators are that black principals and teachers face an even worse situation than pupils.

Political Rights

Voting rights legislation culminating in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, gave impetus to black involvement in the political process (registration, voting, party politics and office-

seeking). Statistics compiled by the Voter Education Project (VEP) of the Southern Regional Council report the following changing situation in six Southern states in the 1960's.

Black voter registration in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas and Virginia more than doubled in every state, and the per cent of black voters in terms of registration age population rose spectacularly. In Mississippi by the fall of 1968 55.1 per cent of the voting population had been registered, while in Texas the percentage had risen to 83.1.

Nationally the registration voting situation among blacks leaves much to be desired. The 1970 census revealed that slightly less than 44 per cent of the eligible black voting population votes regularly. This figure must be compared with the better but none too good white percentage of 56 per cent.

Office seeking and holding has been on the increase, especially in the South, where it rose from a handful in the early 1960's to 385 in 1968. Nationally there are currently about 1,800 black office holders, but this is less than one per cent of the 500,000 such positions available. The New York Times (February 4, 1973) reports for 1972 that blacks made a "significant showing" in elections in eleven Southern states, putting 598 blacks in office.

Housing Discrimination

Housing segregation has increased in urban areas since 1960. In rural areas black people have found it more than difficult to obtain standard dwellings.

In the black ghetto the housing density which is 3,071 units per square mile is practically double that of (white) middle class urban neighborhoods. It is almost 100 times more than the residential density in (white) suburbia. Yet since World War II a mere 800,600 central city units of housing have been financed by the Government, compared to the financing of 10 million suburban homes. Only recently (1970-1972) has this pattern altered.

An additional fact about housing for the urban poor (chiefly black) is the tragedy of new highway progress, "urban renewals," etc. which literally destroy more housing for the poor than they create!

Labor Practices

Out of a total of approximately 20 million labor union members in America today (1973) 2 to 3 million are black. This 2 to 3 million represents only one-third of the more than 6.5 million

black workers in the nation. Similarly the 17.5 white union members represent about 25 per cent of the white entire working force.

There are several major problems confronting the black union workers: (1) flagrant discrimination in the building trades and railroad unions; (2) virtual non-presence in Locomotive Firemen or Railway Trainmen's Unions; (3) gross under-representation in the construction unions, e.g., iron workers (1.7 per cent), plumbers (0.2 per cent), elevator constructors (0.4 per cent); (4) relegation to lower paying jobs; (5) relegation to least desirable jobs; (6) lack of opportunity for advancement in the unions.

An indicator of positive change in the labor industry, characterized by many blacks as very racist, is the formation of black unions and black labor caucuses.

6. Cultural Indicators

Art

The professional black artist in America has been largely unrecognized by his white counterpart. As late as 1966 the Museum of Modern Art in New York City did not know of the existence of any "qualifying American Negro Artists." Most blacks were rejected as students at white art schools. Black works held by major white galleries are few: Metropolitan Museum owns 10 out of 1,200; National Collection of Fine Arts, eleven out of 1,599; The Museum of Modern Art, twelve out of 450; the Whitney Museum, 15 out of 1,000. The National Gallery in Washington, D. C., could only recall having three black works and the Art Institute in Chicago, one.

In the world of the black artist today there are several schools of thought expressing different artistic styles as well as degrees of identification with the black experience. These range from those who create art, to which the black community can respond, e.g., Dana Chandler, Jr., to those for whom the issue of blackness is not a matter to be injected into their productions. The fact that most black artists are forming their own galleries does say something, however.

Music

American black people through the "spiritual" gave to the world America's only unique musical form, unless it is jazz and/or the "blues," which are also of black origin. Nevertheless the black-white music statistic is not impressive. In the 1960-1970 decade

only two black records "turned gold," i.e., sold more than a million copies. In the nation's eleven symphony orchestras, there are a total of only six blacks. Further, there are only 150 conservatory-trained black orchestra musicians. In the operatic field it took a Marian Anderson three-fourths of a career to reach the "Met." However, of the eight American-born women in top operatic roles today, four are black women.

Two indicators in the music area stand out in the 1960's: (1) Ornette Coleman's and the late John C. Coltrane's "New Thing" jazz composed "with the pain of being black in America"; (2) the investiture of the Reverend Harold A. Salmon (as the first black priest of a large Roman Catholic parish in Harlem) to the tune of a jazz band and gospel music and a litany for liberation.

Literature

The cultural statistic that reflects most uniquely the changing mood of the black community is literature. Here the full force of the new movements of "black awareness" come to focus. Some concept of the pace of this movement is gleaned from the fact that it took renowned Richard Wright's *Native Son* twenty years to sell a million copies. It took Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul On Ice* less than two. Such is the force of the objective of the angry, "young black poets" whose efforts are "to reunite" the poet and the common people in a common cause.

The corresponding statistic is not nearly so impressive. Four top-level black editors exhaust the trade publishing field, and thirty probably covers the entire publishing industry. Contrary to much opinion, not a great deal is being written by blacks. Much of the black book market is gutted with reprints going back to David Walker's *Appeal* (1829) and earlier, e.g., only about fifty "new black" titles appeared in 1970. This 0 to 8 per cent black authorship is a critical indicator of something other than discrimination—probably the modest black market?

The Theatre

Essentially both "progress" and "change" for blacks in the American theatre can best be characterized by the reminder that Broadway is still the "Great White Way," Ruby Dee, Ed Bullins, Diana Sands, Moses Gunn, Roscoe Brown and a few others excepted. In recognition of this "opaque" situation the Negro Ensemble Company (NEG) and the New Lafayette Theatre (NLT)

groups were founded and have become break-through points for "black experience" acting, black actors and budding playwrights. In Gunn's words "blacks achieved 'visibility' in the 60's, and in the 70's they may achieve 'variety' in exposing 'the (whole) scope of black experience and in playing the entire canon of dramatic literature.' "

Meanwhile the statistic is depressing. Most blacks still work in all-black productions. Plays and musicals with metropolitan settings seldom have blacks. Black producers are almost non-existent, as are black directors—except in the black theatre. The actors' union, Equity, has approximately 500 blacks out of a 16,000 (1970) membership. Broadway plays seldom deal seriously with black themes. A significant indicator in the field of theatre as in the other arts has been the rise of black theatre groups, e.g., NEG, NLT. Probably the major problem of the black theatre, in addition to dealing with white racism, is gaining and maintaining an audience. In the last five or six years these have changed from 70 per cent white and 30 per cent black to 30 per cent white and 70 per cent black.

Films

Black indicators are beginning to appear in the film industry. Catering to a not inconsiderable black movie audience, white and black producers and actors have recently developed a new approach in projecting black people. Gone is the slow-moving obsequious Step-'n'-Fetchit, only to be replaced by the super-black too often identified with crime, narcotics and gross immorality. A significant indicator here is the almost total lack of serious treatments of serious black themes from black history.

Religious Indicators and Educational Planning

Simpson and Yinger in discussing the functions of religion among minorities state: "The religious belief and institutionalized structures of a group not only show intrinsic religious aspects but reflect the secular problems faced by the group."[6] The statement has validity when applied to the black church. In this part of the paper we shall attempt to show how black churches can interrelate, institutionally, through an education and planning process, the demands for liberation and the nature and purpose of the black church in the black community.

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6. G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities* (New York: Harper, 1953), p. 515.

In the light of the indicators that have been discussed, education in the Black Church must assume the role of change agent and emphasize its function as an educator for change. Black church members, individually and collectively, need to be made aware of and empowered to deal with systemic oppression and subtle racism.

There are several "indicators" of the effectiveness of black churches in black communities dealing with the issues highlighted by the brief indicator study we have discussed. First the black church must recognize its unique function as a liberator in the black community. Such liberation is comprehensive, embracing social, economic, political and cultural aspects of oppression. Second, the black church must recognize and become committed to the engagement of those issues and problems which restrict the fullest possible development of persons as persons and groups as groups. Third, the black church must reconceptualize its program to effect maximal change in the personal and social conditions of all of the people in its communities. Fourth, the black church must devise ways of enabling its leadership to develop more effective planning styles and support systems inside and outside the local congregation. Finally, the black church must derive an evaluative process to check out its performance and chart future directions.

If we think of these competencies in relation to the end-goals of the Gospel and its saving words to persons, the following "indicators" and activities[7] should be evidenced in black churches as they are educating and guiding their members in liberating ministries:

Dialogue

A logical first indicator of a program of liberation for black people through a black church in a black urban community is a committed congregation. Congregational study in some depth by the laity of the church to determine anew the nature, purpose, mission and ministries of the black church is essential if black church members are to come to grips with the demands of the gospel in the black urban ghetto.

This study program is not to be "study-in-general" but "study-for-planning and decision." It should involve congregational and community persons as well as members who are decision-makers and the action-authorizers.

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7. cf. *Resource System for the Local Church Council on Ministries.* ed. James E. Alexander (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1970). *passim.*

The content of such study should include black studies in biblical, theological, historical, sociological and other disciplines that can identify and illumine the task of the Black Church.

Diagnosis

Identifying, investigating and analyzing the needs of black people in the parish area of the black church becomes a second major indicator toward developing a viable ministry with black people in urban communities.

"Diagnosis" in this sense of the term is more specific than a "survey." It is radical issue-definition or discovering those problems in the black community that require definition, decision and action by the black church. Specifically this means locating and defining the problems that oppress black people.

The next step in diagnosis is the gathering of information about the issues and interpreting what they mean for our black congregations.

Goal-Setting

Describing, coordinating and adopting goals to be acted toward is the third step in the indicator model to effect liberation through the black church.

The congregation having understood and committed itself to the mission of the black church, identified and analyzed certain specific issues in the context of an oppressive white society, it is now prepared to develop an action goal(s), i.e., "a statement of intention for one aspect of the congregation mission," e.g., developing a tutoring program by September 1 for elementary grade children, ages 9-11 years old, to enable them to cope more effectively with their ongoing problematic formal education learning tasks.

Two remaining steps in goal-setting are (1) the coordination and prioritizing of the several or many action goals in a unified design and (2) the validation and authorization of the goal(s) by the board of control of the local church.

Planning

Detailing action-goals follows naturally after these goals have been set. This activity entails inventing, devising, selecting and describing specific activities, experiences, strategies, etc., which the congregation may actually do to achieve their adopted goals.

Generally the following steps in planning should be observed: (1) the development of an action sequence; (2) the delineation of

a program, i.e., what, precisely, needs to be taking place if the goals are to be actualized, what settings are to be constructed such as classes, study groups, service-action groups, retreats, training programs, etc.

A program for black liberation through black urban church-oriented religion must have impact upon its every facet: (1) preaching; (2) worship; (3) church education; (4) church fellowship; (5) church administration; (6) church finance; (7) church budgeting, etc.

Leadership

Leadership is a crucial indicator of the potential effectiveness of any program of black liberation. C. D. Coleman points to the broader task that this implies for the black church in saying: "The first priority for the black church is to recapture the leadership of the black people. It must reclaim the unqualified trust and commitment traditionally associated with the black church and the black community."[8]

This having been done, black churches that opt for the liberation approach need to consider how to involve those who are to be immediately affected at every stage of planning. Basic questions to be asked are: (1) what leader-competencies are needed? (2) what are the sources of this leadership? (3) how indigenous is the leadership to the community to be served? (4) what are some style-models of black leadership in church-oriented programs of religion? (5) how can expertise in and outside of the black community be utilized?

Organization and Administration

Church organizational structuring is the process of developing related goals, experiences, and settings into a dynamic, vital, systematic whole. Administration in the church sector is the constant task of clarifying, articulating and supporting the ministry to which the church is committed through the enabling leadership of pastor and laity, both on behalf of the entire congregation.

Relating these concepts to the black church experience that is liberation-oriented has several implications: (1) the function of the church in the black community should determine its institutional form and its administrative style; (2) the unique role of the black

8. C. D. Coleman, "Agenda for the Black Church" Religious Education, Vol. LXIV, No. 6 (November-December, 1969), p. 441.

church in the black community, requiring almost total involvement and instantaneous decision-making calls for an autonomous, flexible, community-based board of control; (3) the need to involve people who will be affected by change in the planning process means significant small group activity in deciding issues of direction, policy and action.

Evaluation

An evaluation indicator builds accountability into the entire programming process. In terms of measuring the direction and pace of change in effecting liberation in the black community, it serves a unique and irreplaceable function in seeking quality information, checking out performance and charting futures.

The method of evaluation here is the collection, analysis and interpretation of any and all information that may become the basis for determining the degree to which an enterprise, in this case black liberation through the black church in the black community, has achieved its goal. Evaluation is more than assessment. It is actually measuring progress in fairly specific previous identified areas of endeavour.

The following steps are minimal in evaluating achievement in black church ministries: (1) the identification of information needed to evaluate the program; (2) determining the method of gathering information; (3) interpreting the information gathered; (4) decoding the evaluation for future use.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to define, identify, articulate and relate the use of "social indicators" to the current task of the black church in the black community, where it must function as spiritual resource, change-agent and adult educator. A basic question that it raised was this: Do black churches use meaningful indicators in measuring their condition in the black community in relation to their avowed goal of liberation? A further question was: Does Christian Education serve this function in any significant way?

This has not been a definitive investigation but an exploratory one. Hopefully it will stimulate further study by black and white researchers in the cognate fields it touches.

Martin Luther King, Jr.: Theology in Context

by Lonnie Edmonson and Archie Logan, both M.Div. '75

The present examination of the ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will focus on the relationship between theology and the endorsement of nonviolent direct action as a Christian method to achieve social change.

Certain special features of Dr. King's situation stand out as significant for the scope and orientation of this study. First, there is the fact that Dr. King was self-consciously neither an ethicist nor a theologian. He wrote no systematic exposition of the principles of the Christian faith, nor did he systematically treat the data of Christian decision-making. Thus a particular understanding of the nature of the theological task is necessary before we can proceed to call Dr. King a theologian. If theology is an essentially intellectual, critical and analytical discipline, then it becomes difficult to consider Dr. King as a theologian in the traditional sense. According to the traditional understanding of theology the discipline is only indirectly and abstractly related to particular human contexts. However Dr. King's charismatic role in the struggle for black liberation is a manifestation of direct and pragmatic participation in the social and political arena.

How can we reconcile the apparent contradiction between the reflective, academic theologian and the activistic crusader? As suggested, a new understanding of theology is required. Instead of starting with the data of the Christian faith and systematically expounding its relevance to contemporary concerns, the kind of theology in which King was involved *begins* with the concrete human context—in this case, the dehumanization and oppression of the poor and the black—and maintains the concern for developing humanity as its central emphasis. In short, there is a specialized anthropological focus at the core of King's theological pronouncements.

It is not the intention of this study to debate the validity of such an approach. We are aware of critical perspectives which suggest that such an approach represents, at best, the confusion of

theology and ethics, religion and social reform. Such is the critique offered by Joseph Washington, who suggests that in King's use of Jesus as a norm for Christian behavior "the absence of any real theological understanding is blatant,"[1] and that King was unable to transcend his roots in a black folk religion. Such a criticism is rooted both in an identification with traditional theological norms and in an understanding of theology as primarily discursive. It is our thesis that King's theology represents a move away from abstract speculation toward contextual application. What King was concerned with was not the articulation of the "truth" of Christian humanity in general terms, but the bringing into reality of that humanizing possibility. His concern tended to move him away from in-depth analysis to application of what he felt were the self-evident principles of the faith. We must also note from the outset that it is not our intention to deal exhaustively with King's theology. We must face the tragic fact of Dr. King's assassination at a time when his tactics and principles were being called into question by more militant, aggressive segments of the black community. How Dr. King might have modified his stance in light of mature conceptions of Black Power and cultural nationalism cannot be stated with certainty. We are forced to follow an inferential path and to avoid general criticisms based on hindsight.

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As a black American, Dr. King had seen and known first hand the dynamics of a racially exclusive society. In *Stride Toward Freedom,* he writes of childhood memories of Southern racism:

> I remembered a trip to a downtown shoestore with Father when I was still small. We had sat down in the first empty seats at the front of the store. A young white clerk came up and murmured politely:
>
> 'I'll be happy to wait on you if you'll just move to those seats in the rear.'
>
> My father answered, 'There's nothing wrong with these seats. We're quite comfortable here.'
>
> 'Sorry,' said the clerk, 'But you'll have to move.'
>
> 'We'll either buy shoes sitting here,' my father retorted, 'or we won't buy shoes at all.' Whereupon he took me by the hand and walked out of the store. This was the first time I had ever seen my father so angry. I still remember walking down the street beside him as he muttered, 'I don't care how long I have to live with this system, I will never accept it.'[2]

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1. Joseph Washington, Jr., *Black Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 5.
2. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 5.

It is obvious that, in part, Dr. King's commitment to human liberation stemmed from his membership in the community of the oppressed. It is crucial to realize, however, that in the Christian faith he found the primary motivation—a motivation so intense, compelling and demanding that his zeal for human dignity would have been of prophetic stature regardless of his station and situation in life.

In King's thinking nothing was possible apart from God; with Him were all things possible. Therefore religious questions were answered by neither pietistic withdrawal nor scientific materialism, but in terms of action linked to God:

> Neither God nor man will individually bring the world's salvation. Rather, both man and God, made one in a marvelous unity of purpose through an overflowing love as the free gift of himself on the part of God and by perfect obedience and receptivity on the part of man, can transform the old into the new . . .[3]

This also suggests the primacy of religious categories in King's thinking. Christian understandings were not merely dragged in through the back door; it is obedience to God that provides the rationale for social action: "Your highest loyalty is to God, and not to the state or the nation, or any man-made institution. If any earthly institution or custom conflicts with God's will, it is your Christian duty to oppose it."[4]

Similarly, the critique of segregation is not merely based on political or economic considerations. King saw racist structures as antithetical to Christian human relations:

> Racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity we have in Christ. . . . Segregation scars the souls of both the segregator and the segregated. The segregator looks upon the segregated as a thing to be used, not a person to be respected. Segregation substitutes an 'I-it' relationship for the 'I-thou' relationship. Thus it is utterly opposed to the noble teachings of our Judeo-Christian tradition.[5]

Here, in the recognition of the dehumanizing effects on both oppressor and oppressed, is one seed for a doctrine of reconciliation; another source was King's understanding of the nature of man in Christ or man conformed to God in obedience. King saw this perfect state as "a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony."[6]

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3. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 124.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
5. King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, p. 182.
6. King, *Strength to Love*, p. 1.

This was profoundly influential in his choice of tactics, for the future reconciliation had always to be considered. Only if black people could bring together "toughmindedness and tenderheartedness"[7] could they "move creatively toward the goal of freedom and justice."[8] In King's opinion nonviolent direct action avoided softminded complacency and hardhearted violence and was thus the ideal vehicle to bring about reconciliation. (Segregation was to be criticized from this same vantage point. By attempting to substitute a man-centered universe for a God-centered universe, segregation contradicts the quest for balance and results in "practical atheism.")[9]

The quest for harmony and balance is evident throughout King's published works. It is derivative ultimately from his conception of God. King writes, "God combines in his nature a creative synthesis of love and justice which will lead us through life's dark valleys and into sunlit pathways of hope and fulfillment."[10] Agapé love is the highest expression of God's reconciliatory nature. Translated into human interaction this means that "we love men not because we like them, nor because their ways appeal to us, nor even because they possess some type of divine spark; we love every man because God loves him. At this level, we love the person who does an evil deed, although we hate the deed that he does."[11]

This brings us to an important aspect of King's philosophical theology, that is, his willingness and desire to separate an evil deed from the human agent who commits the deed: ". . . The evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is. An element of goodness may be found in our worst enemy."[12] By this logic, racism, slavery and injustice are all attributable to human weakness, ambivalence or unenlightenment. However a specific moral demand emerges at this point for the Christian church: "As the chief moral guardian of the community, the church must implore men to be good and well-intentioned . . . Never must the church tire of reminding men that they have a moral responsibility to be intelligent."[13] The influence of the "social gospel" as promulgated by Walter Rauschenbusch is evident here. In King's opinion, Rauschenbusch had done a great

7. *Ibid,* p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.,* p. 74.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 7.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 37.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 31.
13. *Ibid.*

service for the Christian Church by insisting that the gospel deals with the whole man, not only his soul but his body, not only his spiritual well-being but his material well-being."[14] Thus King's activism was buttressed by the belief that:

> . . . any religion which professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried.[15]

The most familiar building block in King's pilgrimage to nonviolence is the so-called "love ethic" of Jesus, which he eloquently describes as "a radiant light revealing the ugliness of our stale conformity."[16] The significance of this principle for King cannot be overstated. "Love for enemies," declares King, "is the key to the solution of the problems of our world."[17] Without love the struggle for justice is futile. "There will be no permanent solution to the race problem until oppressed men develop the capacity to love their enemies."[18]

Closely related to the love ethic is the role of suffering; blacks are among the "creatively maladjusted" who are to bring about the redemption of the human race:

> Human salvation is in the hands of the creatively maladjusted . . . Christianity has always insisted that the cross we bear precedes the crown we wear. To be a Christian, one must take up his cross, with all of its difficulties and agonizing and tragedy-packed content, and carry it until that very cross leaves its mark upon us and redeems us to that more excellent way which comes only through suffering.[19]

The philosophy of nonviolent direct action, as King understood it, was the only logical option for his intensely moral program of protest. King saw in nonviolence the appropriate tactic for his philosophical orientation once he realized its social applicability:

> Prior to reading Gandhi, I had about concluded that the ethics of Jesus were effective only in individual relationship. The 'Turn the other cheek' philosophy and the 'love your enemies' philosophy were only valid I felt when individuals were in conflict with other individuals; when racial groups and nations were in conflict a more realistic approach seemed necessary. But after reading Gandhi, I saw how utterly mistaken I was.[20]

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14. King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, p. 73.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Nonviolence nearly emerges as the exclusive tactic, but it is not the only option discussed by Dr. King, nor is it the only one which receives his support. But nonviolence is clearly foremost in King's thinking. In addition to its logical consistency with what has gone before, other positive aspects are appealed to by Dr. King:

1. Nonviolence maintains the dignity of the oppressed and avoids the malice and hate of the oppressor.
2. Nonviolence exposes injustice to public scrutiny and thus neutralizes brutality and terror tactics.
3. Nonviolence is the balanced combination of the toughmind and tenderheart.
4. Nonviolence as a means is consistent with the ends sought.
5. Nonviolence is the only logical option in the face of white political and military power.
6. Nonviolence keeps the issues clear and avoids confusion.

King abhorred violence in any manifestation. His critique of the use of force was informed both by political pragmatism and by moral demand. Thus King was at philosophical and theological odds with the supporters of Black Power. Fundamentally King saw Black Power as negativistic. He argued that "Beneath all the satisfaction of a gratifying slogan, Black Power is a nihilistic philosophy born out of the conviction that the Negro can't win."[21] (Elsewhere King makes a more positive assessment of Black Power, but even then his emphasis is on political and economic self-development, not on the use of force.)

Dr. King's attitude toward other tactics is much more moderate than his anti-violence stance. He felt, in fact, that ethical appeals and persuasion had to be "undergirded by some form of constructive coercive power."[22] Included in the category "constructive" are economic boycotts, judicial litigation, alliances with labor and other mutual-interest groups. However King believed that nonviolent direct action would "continue to be one of the most effective tactics in the freedom movement."[23]

The ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the embodiment of theological contemplation and nonviolent direct action as a Christian method to achieve social change. Dr. King, in order to be understood or classified as a theologian, must first be seen as a

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21. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 51.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

minister of the Gospel. He established a new starting point for theology. Unlike traditional theologians who used the God/Man question as a starting point, King began with the human plight of the oppressed, the poor. He did more than philosophize theology. He transformed the "question" and the philosophizing of theology into positive concrete action and accomplishments.

King used the religious tradition to inspire oppressed individuals of America and the world to overcome, to become triumphant. A theology grounded in nonviolent direct action becomes a theology that does more than systematize, it becomes a theology that actualizes. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., more than any other Christian theologian, has realized that religious tradition has direct parallels to human plight:

> We are all one in Christ Jesus. And when we truly believe in the sacredness of human personality, we won't exploit people, we won't trample over people with the iron feet of oppression, we won't kill anybody . . . Man is a child of God, made in His image, and therefore must be respected as such.[24]

24. Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 72.

The Kenneth Willis Clark Collection of Greek Manuscripts

On the afternoon of May 15, 1975, the Friends of Duke University Library and the Faculty of the Divinity School honored Kenneth Willis Clark with a reception in the Rare Book Room of Perkins Library. The occasion was celebrated by naming the collection of Greek manuscripts for Dr. Clark, Professor Emeritus of New Testament, who served in the Divinity School from 1931 to 1967.

Greek manuscripts, particularly those of the New Testament, have been the substance of Kenneth Clark's study ever since his mentor, the late Professor Edgar J. Goodspeed, introduced him to the lore of these ancient books in the graduate school at the University of Chicago. From those days in the late 1920's, Professor Clark has concentrated his teaching, research, and publication on the textual history and criticism of the Greek New Testament.

The pursuit and study of Greek manuscripts have taken him and his wife, Adelaide, throughout America, Europe, and into Asia. From this country his *Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America* (Chicago, 1937) is still the only reference work devoted entirely to New Testament Greek manuscripts in the U.S.A. Both he and Adelaide spent 1949-50 photographing manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai and at the Greek Patriarchate in Jerusalem. On the occasion of Dr. Clark's receiving a D.D. from the University of Glasgow, Professor William Barclay observed in his laureation that Kenneth Clark had probably perused more manuscripts of the New Testament than any of his contemporaries.

Through his dauntless enthusiasm for the study of these ancient books and his zeal to build a research collection of Greek manuscripts, the Duke collection now numbers 64, of which 20 are of the New Testament. Not only has he searched for these books, but he has also assisted with the purchase of many of them. From the day when he and Adelaide arrived at Duke in 1931—it was in the spring of that year that the Library bought its first Greek New Testament manuscript—he has devoted his energies to building an outstanding collection. It is singularly appropriate that the collection be called *The Kenneth Willis Clark Collection of Greek Manuscripts.*

John L. Sharpe, III
Curator of Rare Books
B.D. 1965, Ph.D 1969

Focus On Faculty

JOSEPH B. BETHEA: *Director of Black Church Studies*

One day in May, 1972, I was conducting some visitors on a brief tour of St. Matthews United Methodist Church in Greensboro. We had recently returned from General Conference in Atlanta, and were preparing for Annual Conference at Lake Junaluska. The St. Matthews Church building was little more than a year old, and I was showing it off with pride and satisfaction (and some concern for the semi-annual note payment due soon). The secretary interrupted the tour to say that Dean Langford of Duke Divinity School was on the phone and wished to speak with me. "Now what could he want?" I said. "Some student probably needs a recommendation."

The Dean wanted to talk with me about some plans the Divinity School had for a program in Black Church Studies. Subsequent talks with the Dean, members of the faculty, the Black Seminarians Union, and others in the Divinity School community, took place immediately; and after a few days I was invited to join the staff as Director of Black Church Studies.

"Who? Me?" It must be a dream! During the years of my study at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, which were also the years of my pastorates in South Carolina, I fancied some involvement in the training of ministers and prospective ministers. The dream did not die during the years of my ministry as pastor in North Carolina and District Superintendent in Virginia. I suppose it was the dream that led me to pursue a graduate degree at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond. I did not complete that degree, but I think the experience helped me put some things in proper perspective.

"Who? Me?" The son of a successful pastor and District Superintendent in South Carolina might be expected to make some contribution to the life of the church. I still want to learn how to preach (if that can be learned). But to live in the reality of a dream, at least partially, to have some small part in the development of God's preachers and ministers, is joy unspeakable.

"Who? Me?" Since I had married Shirley Cundiff in 1958 and Josefa Elizabeth was born in 1964, I consulted with them. I also sought the advice of Bishop Earl G. Hunt, Jr. and some other

friends. As I reflect upon those consultations, I'm not sure that their reactions were not influenced by my own enthusiasm.

And so I'm here at Duke—recruiting black students, advising them in planning their courses of study, assisting them in their field education placement and supervision, and helping them meet their financial and adjustmental needs here at Duke. In addition to my work directly with black students, I share in the development of courses related to the black religious experience, in the development of continuing education experiences for black church leaders, and I make some effort to bring to Duke an awareness of the role of the black church and of the black minister.

If my presence and work contribute to the wholeness of theological education at Duke, that result will justify the time and effort.

* * *

HERBERT O. EDWARDS: *Associate Professor of Black Church Studies*

It is never easy to find a way into another person's thoughts; it is not always easy for them to share enough of themselves with us to permit more than a passing and inadequate glance at the basic reality that is the other person.

It is no less difficult to lift out of the foggy bottoms of memory those events and circumstances, which, when honestly shared with others, will help them to better understand why I am me and no one else. Why I think as I think, feel as I feel, loathe what I loathe, dream what I dream. In spite of the difficulty involved, I find it necessary to try to take a brief intellectual, spiritual, and experiential stroll down memory lane, stopping here and there to allow permissible glimpses at those factors which I consider possessed of significant yesterdays for me.

Life began in a small coal mining town in West Virginia. Black men and white men earned their living by working underground in the coal mines where the coal dust colored everyone black. The cave-ins and explosions were as democratic as the black dust, making no distinctions of color, snuffing out life without regard for the values of racism.

However, the two major institutions in the town, the church and school were white and black. There was no high school in the county for black children; there was one for white children less than two miles away. So we all rode buses to high school. And whenever the white children received a new bus, we would get their old bus. They rode four miles a day; we rode forty-four miles each way to and from school, eighty-eight miles per day.

During World War II, the county authorities decided that they had to save gas, so black students were required to walk two miles each morning, almost to the white high school where their bus would pick them up; no change was made in the bus schedule for white students. Black parents protested until the policy was changed.

I worked in the coal mines for almost two years after finishing high school. Events and circumstances led me to Cleveland, Ohio. I had been called to preach and, for reasons unknown to me, had dreamed of doing so in Cleveland, Ohio, a place to which I had never been, not even for a visit.

After working in a foundry and steel mill for two years, I was drafted into the Armed Forces, spending 19 months in Europe. I felt the need to complete college in three years in order to save a year of G.I. eligibility to assist me in Seminary.

While at Harvard Divinity School, I began serving the Union Baptist Church in Cambridge as minister. In 1961 I went to Baltimore as minister of the Trinity Baptist Church. I taught philosophy and history at Morgan State College also.

My involvement in the Civil Rights struggle, both in Cambridge and in Baltimore, seemed to me a natural response to the demands of the Gospel. So, in the winter of 1964-65, I took a leave of absence from my church and worked with the National Council of Churches in the Delta Ministry in Mississippi.

In working with black churches in Mississippi, and in the Poverty Program in Baltimore upon my return, I found myself struggling with the problem of the relationship of the church to other institutions and institutionalized patterns of behavior in the social order. This concern was eventually to send me back to school for more study.

My appointment by Governor Tawes of Maryland as the Executive Secretary of the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, charged with the responsibility of enforcing the 1964 Civil Rights law in the state, also gave me opportunity to work with churches across the state in seeking their help to gain compliance with the new law.

As in my youth in West Virginia, I learned again the strength, power, and commitment to racial injustice, of those twin guardians of racism, the church and the school. How they complemented each other! The former supporting and contributing to an ethos of anti-blackness in the name of God, and the latter transmitting a fund of culture that denied the black presence any significant role in

the history of the country, in the name of white patriotism. Black religious expression had no validity in the former; black history and culture no place in the latter.

I left Maryland to accept the position of Executive Director of the Providence Human Relations Committee in Providence, Rhode Island. After a year in that position, I entered Brown University.

In the last few years, prior to coming to Duke, I have taught at Trinity College and the University of Hartford (College of Education), in Hartford, Connecticut, at the University of Rhode Island, and at Harvard Divinity School.

Many things are not yet clear to me as I reflect on the long and circuitous route that I have traveled to this place. One thing, however, is clear. My life is still intimately bound up with those two institutions—school and church—which first introduced me to the fate of blackness in a world of whiteness which is yet determined to deny any significant status and meaning to the created beings of God clothed in ebony. Nonetheless, for me the struggle continues, the struggle not to be disobedient to the heavenly vision!

All of my yesterdays drive me on; all of God's tomorrows draw me on. So be it!

Book Reviews

Christian Ethics for Black Theology. Major J. Jones. Abingdon. 1974. 205 pp. $4.50.

In an effort to bring Christian ethics into the black struggle for liberation and into the black theologizing process, Major Jones pinpoints and discusses many of the problems faced by black Christians in a pro-white society. The issues dealt with are relevant, and must claim our attention in the continuing effort to create a new church and a new society.

Amid all the rhetoric about liberation and reconciliation, Jones is bold to assert that the idea of reconciliation is not relevant for current American race relations. Since the concept of reconciliation implies a prior ideal relationship, and since there has been no such relationship between blacks and whites in America, what is there to reconcile? Rather an altogether new relationship, creative and loving, and that never existed before, is proposed.

Agapé for the white, ex-master oppressor, and agapé for the black, ex-slave oppressed, may issue in differing mandates. Thus the ethical question must be divided. Jones proceeds then to develop an ethical mandate for black Christians.

Christian love, non-violence, and an assumed posture of freedom and hope are important assets in the liberation struggle. These formulations, for Jones, meet the demands of the Christian ethic, and, since their potential has never been exhausted in the struggle, they are viable principles by which the black Christian may act today.

Hate is futile. Agapé love, "affirmation of the other, with a complete disregard for self . . . mutual concern for the other. . . . the empowering disposition to serve another without thought of any good that may accrue . . . [is necessary] to heal . . . the brokenness that now exists between America's ex-slave and America's ex-master."

Critics of Dr. Martin Luther King's nonviolent stance have failed to understand that it is a way of life, as well as a strategy for social change. "Neo-non-violence," or an "assumed posture of freedom" is not only a further elaboration of King's views; it is still viable, because it is redemptive for the oppressed and, when fully implemented, will prove effective to change the oppressor.

For Jones, "no violence can be justified." Violence on the part of the slave toward the master denies the "assumed posture of freedom." It is ethically wrong. It may well lead to a reversal of the slave-master role, and we cannot risk this danger. What we seek is a new and creative relationship where there is neither master nor slave. If one must resort to violence or any un-Christian act, one must recognize that action for what it is. One must at that point adopt what Paul Ricoeur calls the "ethics of distress" and admit that such action is not Christian. We simply cannot claim that "by any means necessary" is ethical in the Christian frame of reference.

Hope is the ultimate option of the black Christian. Liberation is both now and not yet. If it is neither or only one or the other, it is not hope. Jones decries the freedoms that are yet unclaimed by black Americans. To assume the posture of freedom is to claim the unclaimed and be liberated in the midst of oppression. It is both now and not yet.

Dr. Jones would want to be first in asserting that this book is not the last word in "Christian Ethics for Black Theology." He is adamant in his position that his formulations,

possibly not realistic now, are distinctly Christian and ethical. And he dedicates the book to the memory of his parents, who gave him "a deep sense of black religion and of the ethical," and to his daughter and her friend, "who will in the future live a fully recognized hope—a liberation and freedom for which black people of my generation can only hope and yearn."

—Joseph B. Bethea

Contemporary Reflections on the Medieval Christian Tradition. Essays in honor of Ray C. Petry. George H. Shriver, ed. Duke, 1974. 279 pp. $9.75.

Historians are, as a general rule, reluctant to review a *Festschrift,* especially when it is a volume of essays produced by students as a tribute to their teacher. Anthologies of essays are notoriously difficult to review because of their miscellaneous character. The essays in this volume are devoted to five general subject areas, reflective of Professor Ray C. Petry's own teaching and research: (1) preaching in the great tradition; (2) Christianity and the arts; (3) reform, dissent, heresy; (4) history, eschatology and the contemplative life, and, finally, (5) teaching in the great tradition. Aside from an appendix, which includes a bibliography of Professor Petry's published works (compiled by Joyce L. and Donn Michael Farris) and three addresses composed by Professor Petry himself, brief editorial comments by George H. Shriver, and an appreciation of Ray C. Petry by a former colleague, Stuart C. Henry, the majority of essays are written by Professor Petry's former students. One essay—very unusual in any *Festschrift*—is written by Professor Petry's own teacher, John T. McNeill, and one by his former bishop and fellow medievalist, William R. Cannon, now of the Atlanta Area of the United Methodist Church. One can reasonably expect that a collection of this kind will be somewhat uneven, since no teacher's students (even the students of a well-known and respected teacher) are all equally gifted.

Such hesitations, though understandable, are not well-founded in the case of this *Festschrift.* While not all contributions are equally valuable, none of the essays in this volume is unsatisfactory, most are quite good, some are even excellent. J. T. McNeill's essay, "Perspectives on Celtic Church History," is immensely instructive and well worth the price of the book. W. R. Cannon's brief survey of the rise of the university as a medieval institution, while presenting nothing very new to the specialist, is still a useful synthesis which can profitably be assigned to students. David Burr's attempt to define the limits of intellectual freedom in the later Middle Ages by reference to the case of Peter Olivi is an original and stimulating piece, as is Larry Bond's argument for the centrality of Christology in the coincidence of opposites in the teaching of Nicholas of Cusa.

Maurice Ritchie's emphasis on the pastoral concern of John Tauler is a welcome reminder of an important perspective on medieval mysticism and an invitation to further research. William Mallard examines the *Sitz-im-Leben* of forty sermons of John Wyclif in order to sketch the character of Wyclif outside the lecture halls of Oxford. The sermons show him as "a primarily moralistic preacher" with an "inflexible outlook on faith and morals." I was sorry that James Jordan did not pursue more explicitly his debate with James S. Preus, since Jordan argues that Faber Stapulensis places a higher value on the literal sense than either Preus or I believe he does. I am not yet persuaded that Jordan is right (though I am not unpersuadable) and would like to see the passage cited in footnote 44, page 105, reproduced in the footnotes and more extensively interpreted.

George Shriver offers a useful bibliographic essay on Catharism, which

appeared in an earlier form in the periodical, *Church History*. James White has, as always, written intelligently on Christian worship, this time on the influential and much used *Rationale divinorum officiorum* of William Durandus (c. 1286). Gerald Shinn has summarized the results of his extensive research on the eschatological function of the iconography of the Dresden Manuscript of the *Sachsenspiegel*. Roger Ray and Grover Zinn have written careful and interesting essays on the nature and role of history in Oderic Vitalis and Hugh of St. Victor.

In short, Professor Petry's students have honored their teacher with a collection of essays of which he can justly be proud. Alumni of the Divinity School who are not medievalists will be glad to have available in a convenient form the reflections of Professor Petry on the nature of Church history and the role of the historian in the Church, his chapel talks on the relation of Christianity and the arts, and his address at Southeastern Seminary on the place of the Divinity School in the University.

—David C. Steinmetz

God Incognito. S. Paul Schilling. Abingdon. 1974. 207 pp. $5.95.

In the past decade we have seen the publication of a number of books dealing in one way or another with the problem of religious experience—or absence of it—in a secular age. S. Paul Schilling has added another to that list with the publication of *God Incognito*, a sequel to his earlier book, *God in an Age of Atheism*, also published by Abingdon in 1969. The latter was a study of the significant alternatives and challenges to theism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—from Feuerbach to Altizer. In it Schilling attempted an analysis of the bases of the atheists' varied objections and "a fresh exploration of the meaning of God, with particular reference to the atheistic criticisms." (*God in an Age of Atheism*, p. 137) The new book is an effort to correlate (a methodologically important word) the meaning of God proposed there with actual experience, thereby building a case for the reality of the experience of God and of the God experienced. (It should be noted that, according to critics influenced by "the linguistic turn," the question of meaning is prior to the question of validity. This means that the attempt at communication with these critics on their terms must involve the establishment of the *meaning* of the word "God" prior to any consideration of the *validity* or *reality* of some experience associated with that word. See Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language*, Chapter 1.)

After a rather general characterization of the context for this work, Schilling turns to a consideration of the meaning of experience and religious experience. Here he is laying the groundwork for a broad concept of religious experience which can incorporate the "intimations of transcendence" on which he relies. For that reason it is disappointing that the ground is not more carefully and extensively laid. Schilling wants to insist on the reality of the referent of religious experience (thereby avoiding a subjective idealism) while at the same time assuming that "the presence or absence of a religious dimension in experience depends on how it is taken. . . ." (p. 32) Granted that these two assertions are not necessarily contradictory, I still wonder why Schilling did not see fit to give a fuller account of his epistemology so that we could see how they are related. The question is touched in chapters 2 and 10, but never with the care and probity we would expect from a theologian of Schilling's standing. (It is interesting that Schilling implies a rejection of epistemological monism on p. 139, even though certain aspects of his argument seem to rest, at least implicitly, on some sort of monism. We must then ask if Schilling himself was willing to admit the ontological

and epistemological basis of his theological method.)

Part I closes with the recounting of a number of experiences of transcendence. The accounts in chapter 3 are told from the perspective of a conscious awareness of the presence and activity of God. Chapter 4 is comprised of selections from authors who do not necessarily make reference to God, some of whom would explicitly deny belief in God. All this prepares the reader for Part II: "Incognitos of God—Forms of His Unrecognized Presence." Here we see the description of the types of experience in which God is co-implicated, though His presence is unacknowledged or even denied. There are no surprises here: depth in existence, human dependence, the search for meaning and wholeness, the call to responsibility, and the pull of the not-yet.

It appears that Schilling is trying to rebuild a liberal apologetic encompassing the Schleiermacherian and neo-Kantian traditions and the contributions of modern Marxist philosophers—especially Ernst Bloch. The neo-orthodox revolt of the first half of this century should have made us all aware of the problems this raises. Schilling's program, however, is too strongly influenced by Tillich and, perhaps, Boston personalism to heed Barth's warnings against grounding our faith and our theology in some universal religious experience. Schilling is still starting his theology with cultural questions and attempting to discover theological answers in light of them. (p. 5. See Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, Introduction.) The *Thou* addressed by the Psalmist in Ps. 36:9: "In thy light do we see light," is no longer God but the atheist critics. For that reason the final argument for the reality and cognitive value of the experiences *as experiences of God* amounts to little more than the assertion that a theistic answer is, on the whole, more adequate to describe these experiences than a non-theistic one. The next move, to a description of the co-implicate of experience as "the dynamic, personal love that sustains and permeates the whole of our existence," (p. 202) seems to me to be a tenuous one.

I believe Schilling could have used his material to better advantage. I do not object to an attempt to broaden our understanding of religious experience, to deepen our awareness of the unlimited ways we are encountered by God. But why not do that by beginning with the confession that all of creation is subject to the sovereignty and sovereign grace of God rather than by attempting to find closet Christians under every rock? If theology is to be taken seriously as a function of the Church, responsible to the Church and its context, then I believe our energies could be better directed. If we are to speak to the secular culture of this country in this decade, then our theology might more appropriately take the form of prophetic polemic, not soft apologetic.

—Robert E. McKeown
M. Div., 1972

Proclaiming the Promise. Foster R. McCurley, Jr. Fortress. 1974. 160 pp. $4.95.

The author, associate professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, begins by calling attention to the neglect of the OT by the clergy and, indeed, by whole denominations. After briefly listing some of the reasons for neglect (e.g., linguistic, literary, and psychological problems; the OT's equating of nation and people of God, a non-eschatological expectation of salvation, sometimes an unattractive view of deity; etc.), the author states that his hope is to show that "the results of critical exegesis . . . open up for the preacher a wide and varied range of possibilities for proclamation . . ." (p. 5).

After citing the discontinuities between the Testaments articulated by Marcion, Schleiermacher, von Harn-

ack, and Delitzsch, all of whom rejected the theological value of the OT for the Church (pp. 7-11), the author does not accept their conclusion but nonetheless acknowledges major discontinuities (pp. 12-17). On the other hand, there is a basic continuity: What God promises in the OT he fulfills in the New (pp. 18ff.).

McCurley realizes that many of the promises to Israel *were* regarded as fulfilled within the pages of the OT (e.g., that Abraham would have a son and become a great nation), but points out that others were not so regarded (e.g., the expectation of a universal peace, in Isaiah 9 and 11) (p. 35). Indeed, in view of the variety of promises, can one speak meaningfully of "promise and fulfillment"? Perhaps it would be helpful to speak of *the* promise, i.e., not of things, but of God's coming to be with his people. This central expectation is heightened with the passing of time, each experience of the divine presence renewing the expectation of an ultimate fulfillment, which was realized only through "God's deed in Christ" (p. 37). However each expression of the promise (of God's faithful activity in behalf of his people) is a valid text for proclamation; it does not necessarily point beyond itself to Christ, nor does it need be set beside a NT text in order to be preachable (pp. 38ff.). In this fashion McCurley seeks to distinguish himself from the promise-fulfillment relationship which recent seminarians will know best from the works of Gerhard von Rad (e.g., *OT Theology*, II, part 3).

McCurley now turns to the crucial problem: If the new age is already upon us, if the decisive manifestation of the promise is behind us, why does the world remain pretty much as it was previously? In traditional fashion he speaks of the past decisive moment "which still looks forward to a final consummation." Thus the Church still lives under the promise (p. 41). But, if the Church, like ancient Israel, looks both forward and backward, if "Christians are in some sense Old Testament men . . . wherein is the difference or the uniqueness of the New Testament?" The uniqueness, he says, is in what the NT claims: a once-for-all act of reconciliation, an act for which there is no comparable claim in the OT. Thus while the Christian will be able to proclaim the Word solely on the basis of an OT text, he/she will more deeply perceive the need for reconciliation and more decisively declare the ultimate victory (p. 43).

More than one half of the book is given to treatment of specific OT texts (9 of them), plus two sermons. Each text is treated under the following headings: establishing a working text, setting in life, literary matters, the criticisms, the context, interpretive renderings, and theologies of the passage.

Those who desire to study the question of the proper use of the OT in preaching will profit from McCurley's inexpensive and clearly written volume. However, as they read it, they might keep the following questions or observations in mind.

1. Can discontinuities between the Testaments be drawn as strongly or around the particular issues which McCurley raises? I limit myself to two examples, although none which he offers is immune to serious question.

(a) "In the Old Testament the people of God is the empirical nation Israel—in the New Testament the people is a community of the last days" (p. 16). In actual fact, there is more than one view in the OT of what the community is or ought to be, just as there is in the NT. In one view, while the people of God may be concentrated in the nation Israel, it is not limited to it nor does it essentially depend upon it. If McCurley is right, how did the community manage to survive in Babylonia for the last 500 years of the OT period and beyond? Repeatedly Israel was warned by the prophets that the people of God cannot be identified with any given political or geographical entity. A major point of the priestly severance of the Pentateuch

from the longer sacral tradition (the Octateuch) was that Israel was meant to be a worshipping community, not a political power among others (see James Sanders, *Torah and Canon*, ch. 1). In reality, McCurley characterizes Israel from a perspective more akin to the so-called "false prophets" than the canonical writers. The latter never refer to Israel as the "nation of Yahweh" (goy-Adonai), but only as "the people of Yahweh" ('am-Adonai).

(b) "The revelation of God in Christ renders unacceptable the view of the witness to a God who slaughters the first born of Egypt, who commands the Israelites to kill off all Canaanites, who opens up the earth to swallow sinners, or who sends serpents to bite them for their murmuring" (p. 15). Thus, he says, the NT often serves to correct the OT (see also pp. 38, 44, 63). Presumably his subjectivity would not allow him to assert the reverse, which could be stated in the following way: The revelation of God, through Israel's spokesmen, that his mysterious graciousness is at work even in judgment, renders unacceptable the view of the witness to a God who opens an eternal hell to swallow sinners, including those who will not acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah!

2. Is it accurate to characterize the OT as "promise" and the NT as "fulfillment"? Are these obvious descriptions, or do they flow from preconceived attitudes? The OT looks backward as much as forward; it proclaims fulfillment as much as promise. It is characterized by recital of the past as the key to identity in the present. A major point of the Yahwist may be that the kingdom of David and Solomon is the fulfillment of the promise to the patriarchs. When the basic assertion *'immanu'el* ("God with us") is used, it has a pan-temporal meaning (and not merely future). It is even doubtful that the OT, as a whole, expects a "decisive" fulfillment: certainly not the Pentateuch; not the early prophets, who hope for renewal within history; certainly not the wisdom literature; and that only leaves the relatively late proto-apocalyptic and apocalyptic materials. And even McCurley seems uneasy with the description of the NT as "fulfillment" when he is forced to speak of Christ's unfulfilled promises and of the final consummation *yet to occur* (p. 42). His attempt to draw a distinction is quite feeble: "What is unique about the Christian under the promise is precisely the fact that the Christian is simultaneously under the fulfillment of God in the person and work of Christ" (p. 43). But was such simultaneity not the case at *every* moment of Israel's history . . . minus the subjective assertion that any event is decisive? One could say that *every* redemptive act of God is decisive: creation, Abraham's call, the Exodus, Sinai, return from Exile, Bethlehem, etc. For that matter, does he ever act *indecisively*?

3. Are there not dangers in asserting that there is a "canon within the canon" (pp. 44, 38), such that the pastor must pass judgment upon whether a given passage is "appropriate" (pp. 44, 63)? What is to prevent "appropriate" from becoming precisely what I like, or what I think the congregation will tolerate? If the NT becomes the standard for appropriateness, then the NT as interpreted by whom? What parts of it, since it also manifests tensions? Is it not the task of the interpreter to listen to *all* the voices from the Tradition, to bring them into dialogue with each other, to be open to judgment by each of them . . . rather than to assume that one's subjective value judgments are some sort of profound virtue? Is it not conceivable that those passages which we reject are precisely those which we most need to hear? (For those who desire to pursue this topic, I recommend: James Sanders' review of G. E. Wright's *The OT and Theology*, in Interpretation, XXIV [1970], 359-368 and in Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXV [1970], 392ff.;

and his review of B. Childs' *Biblical Theology in Crisis,* in USQR, XXVI [1971], 299-304.)

4. Can one be serious in saying that the function of Israel's law is "to reveal to man the hopelessness of trying to reach God by human means" (p. 22)? The Hebrew word *torah* does not basically mean "law," nor does its usual Greek equivalent, *nomos*. The OT text and the rabbinic literature make it quite clear that Torah (Scripture) has two inseparable aspects: (a) the story (*haggadah*) of what God has done for his people, and (b) stipulations (*halachah*) whereby they may express their gratitude for what God has already done (cf. I John 4:19). (Anyone who needs information in these matters might consult James Sanders, *Torah and Canon,* ch. 1, and his article "Torah" to appear in the Supplement to *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* 1976.)

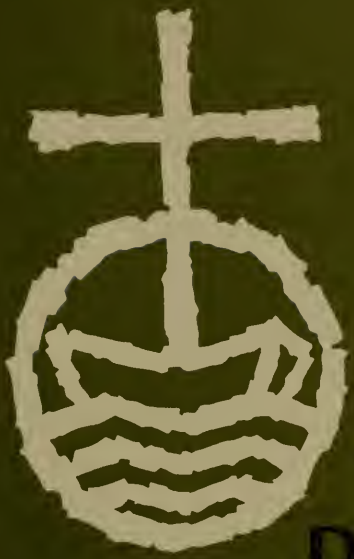
The perplexing move from text to sermon (from what the text *meant* to what it may *mean*) is not well covered by McCurley's book. Many of the assumptions which he makes are not articulated and some which are can be fruitfully questioned. Consider the following instance from pp. 64-65. He sums up the central thrust of Exod. 14:10-31 (Israel caught between the Egyptians and the Red Sea) as follows: "God redeems his people from a bondage from which they are unable and even unwilling to save themselves." How might this be addressed to Christians in the present? Perhaps we could begin by asking: From what bondage does God deliver his unwilling people now? This produces an outline thus:

I. Problem: An Overwhelming Force Entices Us to Wallow in Pessimism
   A. Today's pessimism
   B. Israel's pessimism

II. Response: God Sets Us Free
   A. Israel's God conquered the enemy
   B. In his Son's death . . . God . . . sets us free

About this sermon one might ask at least the following questions. (a) The text does *not* say that God *redeems* his people. It says that, in a specific circumstance, he *redeemed* his people. How can one change the tense, the circumstance, the group? (b) The text does *not* mention the word "sin" nor is there anything in it about an "overwhelming force." Has McCurley let the devil found in NT theology slip into his OT text? (c) How can one move from the group-focus, with physical deliverance, to individual deliverance from sin?

—Lloyd Bailey



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Confrontation: Sunday School

by R. Harold Hipps, '49

The Sunday School, a unique American Institution, is in trouble. It is sick and many say it is dying, at least among main-line Protestant churches.

The cause of that illness and whether or not it will result in death was the central focus of two consultations held under the heading "Confrontation: Sunday School" in January and April, 1975. The consultations were a project of the Christian Educators' Fellowship of The United Methodist Church in cooperation with the Center of Continuing Education at Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Office of Continuing Education at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas.

Almost 500 persons participated in the events at Scarritt and Perkins. Most of the participants were professional Christian educators, although a small number in each event were local church volunteer educators. Because of limited accommodations more than 100 persons were not permitted to register for the consultations, a fact which illustrates the high interest today, especially among professional church educators, in the status of the Sunday School.

It is amazing that prior to these consultations little has been openly faced about the Sunday School crisis. Since 1957, when Life magazine called Sunday School "The Most Wasted Hour in the Week," American Protestantism has suspected a growing crisis in the Sunday School. The main-line Protestant churches have been afraid to bring the issues and the questions out in the open and to deal realistically with the Sunday School. The major denominational Boards of Education have tried to cover the illness with curriculum promotions and the broader arena of the Church School. Church education leaders stopped believing in most aspects of the Sunday School years ago. Many church educators have continued to support the Sunday School only because there was no alternative. For several years the major thinkers and writers in church education have been highly critical of the curriculum-controlled, cul-

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Mr. Hipps is Executive Officer of the Christian Educators' Fellowship and Associate General Secretary in the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church.

turally bound Sunday School and have sought innovative alternatives. The message about the failure of the Sunday School has been heard by many; the message about the innovative alternatives has been heard by very few.

The Sunday School is declining, but it is not necessarily dying. Millions of people—children, youth, adults—are still involved in it. The Sunday School does need help, and it does need updating. It is important to improve the Sunday School we have while better options are being explored.

Finding this to be the situation in which most professional Christian educators are now working, the Board of Directors of the Christian Educators' Fellowship determined that CEF should take the lead in forcing The United Methodist Church, at least, to face head-on the crisis of the Sunday School. Thus "Confrontation: Sunday School" was designed to deal specifically with the Sunday School, that period of time usually between 9:30 and 10:30 on Sunday morning when people join together for fellowship and study. The overwhelming response to the consultations demonstrated the readiness of many church educators to confront the crisis.

The Christian Educators' Fellowship, a United Methodist organization of more than 1,000 professional Christian educators, set as the goals of "Confrontation: Sunday School":

to examine the history of the Sunday School in this country in terms of what we can learn and affirm;
to examine the present-day Sunday School and its operating assumptions;
to examine possible futures of the Sunday School.

The CEF Design Team for the events, working with the Continuing Education Centers at Scarritt and Perkins, built the consultation around major input by four resource persons who are recognized scholars and practitioners in church education: Sara Little, Robert Lynn, Richard Murray, John H. Westerhoff III. Participants had opportunities to hear individual lectures and panel discussions by the four leaders and to engage in discussions with them. They worked in small groups to explore their individual and group concerns about the Sunday School, to explore various models for the Sunday School, to share resources, and to do some model building for the Sunday School of the future.

All evaluations indicate that "Confrontation: Sunday School" accomplished its goals in large measure. For those who participated in the Confrontations at Scarritt and Perkins the Sunday School

will not be the same. Which means that the professional Christian educator will have to do some things differently in the future from what has been done in the past or is being done now.

It was agreed in the consultations that "the Sunday School can't be all bad." Neither can professional Christian educators. There is much in the Sunday School, past and future, that we can affirm and support. But some things will have to be different—especially the role of the professional Christian educator.

I have never believed it was intended that the role of the professional Christian educator was to be "The Keeper of the Sunday School," but most professional Christian educators have functioned in this way. We have taken the lay person's Sunday School, and "they know not where we have laid it!" With the help of our Church structures we have put ourselves in a Sunday School box (CEF image says "cocoon"), and now that these boxes are falling apart we do not know what to do. Our difficulty is our own image, our own box (cocoon), in that, for the most part, we have not really functioned as educators, but as administrators of a Church School, and more often as the Keepers of the Sunday School, as programmers, not educators. When the comfortable and familiar structures are threatened, we are threatened.

The new structures of the Church and the Sunday School will demand more of the professional Christian educator—not less. Who should be better equipped or more competent to aid the congregation in study, diagnosis, goal-setting, planning, designing, testing, evaluating, resourcing, leader development? For many professional Christian educators it is a new role, and many are not equipped to function in the role.

The demand is for a different type of professional Christian educator from what was called for five years ago. The need is for persons with Biblical and theological knowledge, first, and then a knowledge of planning, leading, resourcing for the total life of the congregation. The major working arena is not the Commission on Education, but the Council on Ministries; not Church School education, but congregation (church) education.

In the working structures of the professional Christian educator we are moving from:

Sunday School Class	to	Experiential Learning
Class Organization	to	Group Formation
Curriculum Orders	to	Resource Centers
Pastor-Director	to	Staff Team

Dependency	to	Interdependency
Dependence	to	Independence
Certified	to	Qualified

In the working functions of the professional Christian educator we are moving from:

Answering Questions	to	Asking Questions
Telling	to	Listening
Selling	to	Sharing
Defending (Institutions)	to	Renewing (the Church)
Supervising	to	Empowering
Scheduling	to	Freeing
Training Teachers	to	Developing Leaders
Teacher	to	Learner
Leader	to	Enabler
Expert Resource	to	Resource Person
Specialist	to	Generalist
Director	to	Consultant

The role of the professional educator calls for an abundance of insight, love, patience and the ability to cope.

There was no common diagnosis among the consultation participants, but most agreed that the Sunday School will survive, with its continuing health depending on a blend of continuity with the past and change for the future, a renewing of church structures to be the church, and a freeing of professional Christian educators to be educators.

This issue of The Duke Divinity School Review provides a report of "Confrontation: Sunday School." The text of each of the major papers/lectures/discussions presented by the resource persons is included. It is our anticipation that the contents of this special issue of The Review will provide the resource necessary to enable local churches to confront the crisis of the Sunday School and deal with it realistically in terms of their specific congregations.

The Last of the Great Religious Movements

by Robert Wood Lynn

In the 1940's one of the staple items in the reading diet of many an American high school student was that short story, *The Purloined Letter.* This tale had the necessary twist at the end. A stolen document was to be hidden in a room that would be thoroughly searched. Where could one put it? In a secret panel? In a hollowed-out rung of a chair? How can one hide something important? The answer, of course, was to leave the letter in an obvious place where the sophisticated police, looking for subtle trickery, would doubtless ignore it. The treasured letter was left in a visible place where everyone could see it—and no one did.

So it is with the Sunday School. This institution has been a fixture on the American scene for such a long time that almost all scholars have overlooked its existence. "As a church historian," Professor Martin E. Marty of the University of Chicago has recently declared, "I have always been amazed to see how little attention has been given this basic institution by historians and scholars."[1] The "purloined letter" syndrome prevails in scholarly circles as well as among detectives. It is all the more difficult, therefore, for the contemporary observer to understand the enthusiasm and acclaim which the Sunday School evoked a century or so ago.

In 1910, for instance, a convention of the World Sunday School Association was held in Washington, D. C. Congress adjourned so that its members could be a part of the Sunday School parade, and even a ferocious rainstorm did not dampen the spirits of the "loyal Sunday School army." But the climactic moment came later. At that convention two men stood on the platform. One of them, the head of the International Sunday School Association, was an American layman, the other a lay leader from Great Britain. Sud-

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1. Martin E. Marty, "American Sunday School May Be Defunct," Context (May 1, 1975), p. 2.

denly two men from the audience raced to the stage and, as these two leaders stood side by side, draped the Union Jack around the shoulders of the man from Great Britain and the Stars and Stripes around the American. In one of the most transparently innocent statements ever recorded in print, the American was moved to say, "We have all honor for all the flags of this world, but . . . under these two flags the Anglo-Saxon people have taken upon themselves the responsibility under God of being big brother to all the other flags."[2] If the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes were the flags of this "big brother," certainly one of his favorite institutions was the Sunday School. Through this volunteer agency the Anglo-Saxon race was to work its magic and persuasive wiles upon an unsuspecting world. President Taft spoke on the theme of the Sunday School as an "indispensable institution." Then he lingered to hear the address of Postmaster-General John Wanamaker, known not only for his department stores but in Sunday School circles as the lay leader of one of the largest schools in the country. Among other things Mr. Wanamaker asserted that "the Sunday School was not evolved—it was revealed."[3]

Though it may have been revealed from on high, the Sunday School has also evolved over the better part of two centuries. Let us refresh our memories about that history, dating back to England in the 1780's. The Industrial Revolution had created havoc and disorder within the English society of that time. The older agriculturally-oriented society was being uprooted. As a consequence a flood of disoriented rural folk were pouring into the towns and cities, not unlike the more recent northward migration within the United States. These country folk, once they invaded the cities, became the unwitting victims of the factory system, where adults and children worked for a pittance. The institution of the Sabbath provided the only real escape from relentless drudgery and routine. Sunday was a free day. On that day hordes of children would roam the streets, disrupting civil order and creating mild chaos on all sides. Robert Raikes, a newspaper editor and Anglican layman, was touched by the spectacle of these ruffians who constantly flirted with trouble on the Sabbath. Along with a few other Anglican evangelical laypersons he launched what was

2. *World-Wide Sunday School Work,* ed. William N. Hartshorn (Chicago: published by Executive Committee of the World's Sunday School Association, 1910), p. 47.

3. Edward Eggleston, "Unpopular Words," Sunday School Time, XVIII (May 20, 1876), p. 321.

probably the first Sunday "charity" school—an institution that provided a smattering of instruction in reading and in prayers.

When the "charity" school came to this country, it was imported to meet a somewhat similar problem. Confusion and disorder reigned not only in Philadelphia and New York but elsewhere. The first American Sunday Schools were designed, as were the English charity schools, to meet the need for civic safety on Sunday and to reach a group of neglected human beings. But once arrived on these shores, the "first day" school was gradually converted by evangelical Protestants into an integral part of their distinctive pattern of education. The genius of the American people in the years from 1815 to 1860 was not so much located in persons as it was in institutions. After the War of 1812-14, a remarkable array of institutions came into being.

At the heart of this educational ecology was the Revival. Around this center clustered a host of varied enterprises, propelled into existence by the evangelical spirit of the Revival.

One of the first offshoots of the Revival was the Sunday School. Next came the nineteenth-century denominational college, an institution which differed markedly from its colonial predecessor. Another institution created on the American shores was the seminary. Making up the ecology of that period—an ecology which persists to this day—were others: the system of public schools that was beginning to take form; the various mission agencies of the churches, foreign and domestic; and a variety of reform movements, such as abolition of slavery, peace, temperance, education and the like. Meanwhile numerous religious journals kept church people informed about the work of each one of these educational ventures.

That basic pattern is still in evidence, though often in a feeble and disorderly state. The problems of the contemporary Sunday School are not simply those of one institution, but rather a reflection of a larger systemic confusion within the enterprise as a whole. But wherever the ecology remains intact and the evangelical spirit is strong, there one will discover latter-day reminders of the Sunday School in its heyday. At its height this "big little school" was the symbol of the most enduring religious movement in American history. It reached Americans of almost all classes, races and denominational persuasions in every decade after the War of 1812-14. No other movement compared to it in appeal or cultural influence. In contrast, the peace movement and the Civil Rights crusade of the 1960's, or even the labor movement in the earlier decades of

the twentieth century, are comparatively short-lived, ephemeral eruptions.

The astonishing durability of the Sunday School movement was not an accident. In the luxury of retrospect one can discern a variety of reasons for its success.

A Passion for Unity

This movement survived, first of all, because of its capacity to maintain unity, despite enormous pressures toward diversity. Unlike the Civil Rights movement, which after two or three years of modest euphoria floundered on the question of class differences, the Sunday School retained its sense of solidarity for well over a century. How was this "movement psychology" sustained? Through two devices: the Uniform Lesson Plan and the convention system.

(1) The Uniform Lessons or International Plan, though criticized and discredited for decades, is one of those continuities that could persist into the future. While its critics have been many and their criticisms valid, they have often missed the point. The Uniform Lesson Plan was an organizational device for maintaining unity between generations, denominations and nations. Edward Eggleston, a Sunday School editor who later wrote *The Hoosier Schoolmaster,* was a harsh critic of this scheme. When the Uniform Lesson proposal was approved at a national convention in the 1870's at the prompting of John H. Vincent and B. F. Jacobs, he remarked, "Dr. Vincent or Mr. Jacobs will be able to look at a watch and tell a body just what identical printed questions they are reading simultaneously to little Baptist boys in Burmah, and little Methodist maids in Minnesota."[4] As a matter of fact, Vincent and Jacobs were very much interested in just that possibility. Those "little Baptist boys" and "little Methodist maids" were doing something together, even if they were separated by geography and culture. That weekly experience was a ritualistic sign and seal of global unity. Nothing could tear the Sunday School movement apart—not even the pressure of denominational differences, of cleavages between nations or races. The defenders of the Uniform Lesson Plan embraced it as a symbol of a way of life, declaring their unity in spite of all the divisions that could separate them from other people. In an age desperately in need of symbols of unity, the Uniform Lesson Plan was a reminder of a greater oneness that could transcend all differences.

4. *Ibid.,* p. 191.

(2) The second device was the convention system. After the Civil War a group of laymen and a few ministers put together the intricate system that linked everybody from village, town, city, county, state and nation—Canada and the United States—and the world! It was all done in the early days without the help of a full-time professional staff. Local conventions focused on teacher training. Saturday afternoon in Buffalo, New York, in the late 1880's was a time when teachers gathered—sometimes 400 or 500—to meet across denominational and church lines to engage in common preparation for tomorrow's Sunday School classes. The conventions helped to start new schools, to support institutions in trouble, and to train and inspire leaders. In that way they kept the movement together.

A Liturgy and a Cause

Another characteristic of a movement is the ability to create a liturgy of its own. Imbedded in that liturgy is the memory and hope of a people, the past, present and future celebrated in song and action. Every movement lives off the music it creates. Certainly that was true of the labor movement. And who can forget "We Shall Overcome"? In the Sunday School a special brand of music developed and flourished over decades. When the creation of that music slacked off in the 1910's and 1920's, the beginning of the end of this movement was in sight.

Still another important achievement of a movement is its capacity to inspire liturgical action. Little today can compare with the Sunday School parade. There is still, for instance, a public holiday in Brooklyn which marks the occasion of that spectacle. A special hymn was created for one of the first of the Brooklyn parades—"Shall We Gather at the River?" Or in the Penny Gazette of 1855 one can read the description of a Western Sunday School celebration. According to the account several Sunday Schools in the "far-off borders of our land" combined to "unite and keep a holiday with pleasant and appropriate services and enjoyments as a means of social intercourse and improvement." The celebration took place in a clearing in the forest where a few ox-drawn wagons carried a host of enthusiastic boosters. Each group had its own banner—"The Sunday School—the Hope of the World"; "We Won't Give Up the Bible"[5] (Who was asking them to give up the

5. "A Western Sunday School Celebration," Penny Gazette (Vol. XIII, No. 5), p. 1.

Bible?). These occasions provided an important opportunity for a people to celebrate the convictions and hopes of a movement.

Any movement must also have a sacred cause, or else it will eventually disintegrate. The long life of the Sunday School movement was made possible, in large part, because of its leaders' capacity to define a cause that was understandable to a wide range of persons of conflicting persuasions—a goal that was possible of achievement, yet suggesting the mystery and romance of a great crusade. Early in the career of the movement the most visible symbol of the Sunday School's cause was those children who needed schooling, manners and religion. But then the Sunday School crusade really hit its stride in the 1820's and 1830's, as it concentrated on preparing the way for the revival and for conversion. That sense of purpose carried the movement well into the twentieth century (and, of course, still dominates vast numbers of these schools). None of the more recent substitutes—whether "character education" or "theological literacy" (the 1950's) or "values training" or anything else—has ever quite replaced the earlier evangelical concern as the mainspring of energy for this movement.

Next, the vitality and reach of a movement can be measured by the numbers of martyrs, heroines and heroes it can identify as its own. The martyrs of the Sunday School legion were those missionaries who established outposts of the movement in remote parts of the world. Among the heroes were Benjamin F. Jacobs and John Vincent (later a Methodist bishop). In particular, Jacobs was a superb leader in the Populist mold. A Chicago produce dealer and real estate operator, this "generalissimo of the Sunday School army" (as he was affectionately known) never lost his touch as one who spoke *for* as well as *to* the people. Foot soldiers in this army, the teachers and the superintendents, could identify with B. F. Jacobs. He knew their problems, spoke the same language, and therefore was able to inspire them to renewed efforts on behalf of the common cause. Jacobs died in 1902, and Vincent moved on to other frontiers. The next generation of leaders was intent on developing a core of *professional* religious educators. Their devotion to professionalism as the new form of competence prompted an understandable impatience with the old-fashioned ways of the Sunday School volunteer workers. In the early decades of the twentieth century a subtle shift of enormous importance took place. If the Sunday School movement had once been able to organize its work and carry forward a vast program without dependence upon a major full-time staff, the new religious educators

were intent upon reversing that pattern and placing the paid professional at the heart of the enterprise. The Sunday School movement was never the same. With the coming of the professional religious educator in the 1910's and 1920's and the arrival of the church educational bureaucrats in the 1940's and 1950's, the movement gradually ceased to belong to the laity.

A Tradition of Amateurs

Every movement finally rests upon a foundation of lay loyalty. Although anti-clericalism cropped up occasionally in the course of the nineteenth century, the lay Sunday School workers were largely willing to include the pastors in their work—but on the terms of the laity and not the clergy. In this connection it is important to observe that there was always room and space in the Sunday School movement for the ministry of women. The woman of the early nineteenth century had suffered such social and religious repression that she was usually blocked out of all forms of active participation in church life. She was allowed to pray silently and to be a part of the congregation. What else could she do? Some women formed what they called female auxiliaries, the early forerunners of the later women's organization in the church. Others worked in the Sunday School. The movement provided occasions for women to come together as a group and to take an active part in a common cause. Here for the first time women worked alongside men in church activities, spoke in Christian gatherings, and at most of the conventions voted on issues facing the delegates. It was in the Sunday School, as well as in the female auxiliaries, that church women began to take a timid step forward.

These women along with their male cohorts embodied the tradition of the amateur at its best. One of the root meanings of the word amateur points toward caring and intelligent love. The amateur is not one who does things poorly, but rather the person who cares about the activity and is intelligent in the way in which he cares. From time to time in the nineteenth century the Sunday School movement encouraged the development of caring and intelligent mentors. For instance, John H. Vincent established a system of normal schools where Sunday School teachers could study the latest in up-to-date pedagogy, Bible geography and other topics. He founded Chautauqua as a national Sunday School university, and eventually, from Chautauqua, launched a nationwide system of local reading groups which in turn encouraged local adult edu-

cation. The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle sparked the first "book of the month" club, sending out books each month in response to the hunger for culture and religion on the part of teachers in Sunday Schools across the land. In its finest moments the Sunday School was a movement of the amateur.

Every movement struggles with the problem of balancing the need for continuity and the imperative of change. A movement that cannot change its ways grinds to a halt, and one which does not incarnate continuity with the past becomes so threatening that it tends to lose its wide appeal and become a sect. For half a century or more the leaders of the Sunday School managed to maintain stability while also encouraging innovation and change. Many a frontier community welcomed the Sunday School missionary—because they were interested not so much in his Gospel offerings as in the presence of a Sunday School as a symbol of civic order and propriety. Succeeding generations of parents looked to the Sunday School as a way of taming their children and maintaining some link with the receding past. While the Sunday School appeared to be an integral part of a conservative social order, it could also harbor and encourage change and experimentation. Kindergartens, for example, were in Sunday Schools long before they entered the majority of the public school systems. In the latter part of the nineteenth century some Sunday School workers were among the pioneers in responding to the challenge of an emerging new stage of life—adolescence. Some of the earliest efforts at formal adult education were begun under the auspices of the Sunday School.

An American Ailment

The flaws of this movement are no less interesting than its presumed virtues. Its deepest-set trouble was a congenital ailment that has often afflicted movements in the United States. Even at its best the Sunday School movement was often living off the mood of the moment. The leaders of the crusade seldom dipped below the surface of things so as to probe deeply into any root problem over an extended period of time. Instead they were inclined to float from enthusiasm to enthusiasm as the way of keeping the movement going and its appeal ever growing. This tendency toward thinness of thought is especially evident in the Sunday School workers' preoccupation with technique.

In the earlier days of the movement the Sunday School leaders were constantly engaged in trumpeting the virtues of one or more

procedures. At the outset of the nineteenth century they were interested in memorization; that obsession produced several generations of virtuosi who could recount thousands of scriptural verses, though without necessarily understanding the meaning of any one portion. In the middle of the last century the Sunday School experts turned toward Biblical geography. One Sunday School after another could display its version of a topographical map of the Holy Land. (Palestine Park was for years one of the favorite sights at Chautauqua.)

At the turn of the century yet another technique had become prominent. The new cause was punctuality. The clock became a fixture in the Sunday School room, and there was a national organization called "On-Timers' Tribe" which had "a pledge to bind and a pin to remind." Other orders such as the "Loyal Sunday School Army" worked for punctuality and promptness. Not surprisingly, the late Victorian Sunday School specialist believed in the railroad man as the most likely candidate for a Sunday School superintendency. Why? His ability to run a railroad would aid in the management of a Sunday School. In the nineteenth century "Akron Plan" (a guiding design for Sunday schools) the clock was often well-placed; the superintendent's bell punctuated the orchestration of movements from one place to another, and the superintendent sat where he could watch people who came in late.

In succeeding decades Sunday School workers have been no less zealous in the pursuit of the newest in technique. For nearly a century and a half the problem has been much the same: the presence of a popular procedure has often allowed the absence of serious and critical reflection upon that technique to go unnoticed and unmourned.

The same quality of thinness is evident elsewhere in the history of the Sunday School. It is apparent, for example, in the manner in which the Sunday School movement avoided those deeper controversies that could have torn apart the movement. One of these divisive issues was, of course, the distance between black and white America. The Sunday School crusade was never able to span that chasm. Indeed, the Sunday School associations in ante-bellum America went to great lengths to remove from their curriculum any hint of conflict over slavery.

The other failure is symbolized by the Bible. As long as there was no question about the authority of the Bible, the Sunday School (or Bible School) flourished. Yet by the 1880's and 1890's the threat of Biblical criticism was unavoidable. Despite a variety

of valiant efforts to popularize Biblical scholarship and make its findings available to a mass following, the majority of Sunday School leaders managed to ignore this threat and to keep going as though the Biblical critics had never written a single word. To this day the average Sunday School has still not been able to mediate the differences between the teachings of the best of the scriptural experts and the opinions and convictions of the rank-and-file church member.

It is little wonder, then, that the disdainful phrase, "a Sunday School faith," has come to be synonymous with superficiality and self-protective innocence. Perhaps this characteristic of thinness is the most legitimate reason which has prompted American theologians and historians to overlook the "big little school." For all of its failings, however, the Sunday School still offers contemporary Protestants a way to understand both their own religious heritage and the history of social movements in this country. The Sunday School movement will probably never happen again. No large scale movement will be able to develop in our time in the same way that the nineteenth-century movements took hold and extended their life over decades. A media society uses up movements as fodder for the 7:00 o'clock or 11:00 o'clock news show on television. A new Sunday School movement would not have time to germinate and grow and make its mistakes without the hot glare of publicity exposing it to a society that, quickly bored, seeks ever-new sensations.

The old Sunday School movement may, therefore, be the last of the great religious movements in American history. This "purloined letter" is ripe and ready for discovery and critical examination.

A Badly Organized Miracle

by Sara Little

From my years of being a professional church educator—and that's a good many (since the summer of 1944; you can figure it)—I recognize, in retrospect, that I have operated on several assumptions about the Sunday School. Only in the preparation for "Confrontation: Sunday School" has the oldest, most nebulous of these assumptions reached the stage of formulation. Simply put, it goes something like this: The Sunday School is an occasion by means of which people come to be related to people in a caring way that potentially enriches their lives.

Let me give two illustrations. Several years ago, when I was named professor at Union Theological Seminary, considerable publicity was given to the appointment of the first woman on the faculty. I received a letter. "Do you remember me?" the letter began. "I am your first grade Sunday School teacher, and remember dear little Sara with great affection. I have followed you all these years with love and pride." "Miss Maude"—whom I remembered, of course—said some other things that symbolize what I mean about caring people.

Take another illustration. Early in my career, I helped a large, affluent church establish a small, rural Sunday School—in those days often called a mission Sunday School, though I refused to allow that term to be used. Within about a month, I had recruited and "trained" teachers, organized a Sunday School, a Sunday School council, a youth group, a choir, a 4-H club, and a women's home demonstration club. We had cleaned up and equipped an unused building, turning it into a Sunday School and a community center. Late one night, filled with samples of about five different kinds of freezer-made ice cream from our party, I remember distinctly thinking deep thoughts on that long, moonlit drive back into the city. One such thought went something like this: "It doesn't really matter that this is a Sunday School. What does matter is that people are brought together by something they deem significant. A whole new dimension of life is being offered for these

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'salt-of-the-earth' people . . . and for me, because of my relation to them." Looking back, I think I was experiencing what Jonathan Edwards once called the expansion of the very self by means of love for others. All of this—Jonathan Edwards excepted—is an illustration of an assumption about the Sunday School, namely, the frequency with which it has created at least the possibility of a caring relationship. Although I have never been naïve enough to think the Sunday School automatically brought about such a relationship, and though I have often found the same kind of thing occurring through other instrumentalities—even, if you please, whatever it is that goes on in graduate theological education—I have a hunch that this first assumption is one in which I represent the masses of Sunday School people throughout the years, whenever it has been possible to say "the glorious Sunday School" with feeling.

There are other assumptions I unearthed in this reflection, but I shall mention only one more—somewhat more abstract, certainly better informed by the academic pursuits in which one engages in order to teach classes. It is this: The Sunday School movement is a lay activity which originated outside the church and is to be understood at least partly in terms of the tensions developed by twentieth-century efforts to integrate it into the life of the institutional church. I think that assumption can be documented. What is now a divisional function in the National Council of Churches was once the domain of the International Council of Religious Education, an official church organization which grew up and gradually supplanted the lay-dominated American Sunday School Union. During the days when I was trying to clarify some of my ideas, I tested out a hypothesis that repeatedly, when the hierarchy of the church has threatened to "take over" the church, some lay movement has emerged to prevent this "takeover." A Lutheran church historian agreed with me. About this time, I came across another confirmation of my thesis in an article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* calling attention to the commemoration of the founding of the First Baptist Church Sunday School in 1816, 150 years before.[1] It was started in a shoe store, and caused the first split in the congregation when members moved into a gallery in the church. The minister called it a secular organization that had no right to meet on the Lord's Day; the members had prayer meetings and refused to allow ministers to participate. Now the Sunday

1. *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* Saturday, January 15, 1966.

School of approximately two thousand members is thoroughly "in" the church, with a staff of ministers, but the tensions illustrated in this situation have been characteristic of a kind of lay-clergy dichotomy.

I was not invited here, however, to make an autobiographical statement, whether in terms of experiences or of development of thought, though such a statement would not be unrelated to our task. How *does* one find out about what the present really is in the Sunday School? How does one inquire whether it is truly glorious—which is to say, how does one accurately assess its state of health?

Statistics

There is always the avenue of statistics. It is the one that would speak most clearly to many people, because many people seek "hard data." I have spent considerable time with this question and found some interesting facts. January 1, 1974, the U. S. population was 211,210,000; the Sunday School enrollment, 36,697,785—17.3 per cent of the population. In 1906, according to a National Council of Churches study, the percent of the population in Sunday School was about the same, 17.1 per cent, though there were only 14 million persons.[2] For 50 years after 1906, the overall trend in Sunday School enrollment was up, as was the case with church membership. However, when one looks at the percentage of enrollment in relationship to population, there was a slight decline in the 1920's, an even greater decline in the 1930's, and then a steady move up again. By 1953, 20.6 per cent of the population was enrolled, an increase from 1906 of 122 per cent. I am not sure when the peak enrollment was reached, nation-wide. For the United Methodist Church, it was 1961, with 6,934,876 persons.[3] I imagine that is the pattern with most major denominations. Church membership, for Methodists, and I draw again on the significant "Study of the Church School" by Dr. Warren Hartman, reached a peak in 1964. U. S. Bureau of the Census figures show a parallel in church membership generally—64 per cent of the population in both 1960 and 1965, beginning a gradual decline for every year

2. Script for filmstrip, "Teach Christ Now," produced by National Council of Churches, Division of Christian Education, for 23rd International Sunday School Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, 1955; and *Yearbook of American Churches,* National Council of Churches, 1960, pp. 279-80.

3. Warren J. Hartman, *A Study of the Church School in the United Methodist Church.* Division of the Local Church, Board of Education of the United Methodist Church, 1972. p. 5.

since that time.[4] According to my figuring, the church membership percentage of the population now stands at 52.1, and, as I said earlier, Sunday School enrollment at 17.3 per cent. The population growth rate is leveling off; in 1973 it was 7.2 per cent, the lowest since 1937. Eventually, unless we continue with drastic losses, the percentage figures may look better. (Not that this is any great comfort.)

Individual denominational studies give the same picture. I studied ten denominations over the period from 1969 to 1974—American Baptist, Southern Baptist, Christian Church (Disciples), Evangelical Covenant, Lutheran Church in America, United Methodist, Presbyterian Church U.S., United Presbyterian Church, Episcopal Church, United Church of Christ. With few exceptions, there has been a fairly steady decline in enrollment. The only gains among these ten, from 1973 to 1974, are among the American Baptists and the Southern Baptists. A Presbyterian Church U.S. study for 1960-68 (I wish it were current) shows a gradual decrease of 27.1 per cent. But for 1966-68, the average *attendance* increased by 38.6 per cent.[5] United Methodist losses from the peak of 1961 to 1970 were 23.8 per cent.[6]

Statistically, then, we have evidence that the Sunday School is not only not growing; it is losing ground, both in relation to its own past and as a percentage of the population. For this information to be helpful, however, much more work is needed. What about geographical regions? Inner cities, rural areas, suburban areas? What about age group enrollment in relation to population trends? Why is it that as evangelical denominations are growing, main line denominations are decreasing? Several studies are under way, nearing completion, and these will be instructive.

Even if these studies were available, for me, at least, they would require some frame of reference, some categories for interpretation. In other words, we need some way of perceiving reality other than a statistical way. This is particularly true for consideration of the present. Last fall, when I consulted a distinguished collection of friends—specifically, Ellis Nelson, John Westerhoff, and Bob Lynn —as to how they would go about interpreting the present, Ellis Nelson said immediately, "Why, the Sunday School is what you

4. *Statistical Abstracts in the United States.* U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1972.

5. Study of the Office of Educational Research, Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U. S. (Now General Executive Board, 341 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia), 1969.

6. *A Study of the Church School in the United Methodist Church,* p. 5.

think it is!" Somehow we spontaneously began building on that idea, in a stimulating short time of brainstorming. Actually, I thought I had my speech practically done, with the notes I made, but when I started to work, they were gone. That was a crisis. I have had to rely more on my own formulations, though I am sure I have drawn on what my colleagues said in that conversation—as well as on hundreds of other conversations, visits to Sunday Schools, articles, and other sources. I believe a case can be made for interpreting the present by means of any one of these images. Engage with me in a kind of metaphor-making activity as my primary way of getting at the present. What is your response when I say, "The Sunday School is what you think it is"? Reflect on some of these possibilities.

Images

1. Incubator for conversion

What an "incubator for conversion" is I am not sure, but the phrase does evoke a kind of image of what the Sunday School is to hundreds of people. I thought of alternative terms—a weekly revival, an evangelistic agency, or, as I read in a book by Arthur Flake, *The True Functions of the Sunday School,* a soul-winning agency.[7] That book, incidentally, a Southern Baptist volume first written in 1930, has been in constant use in various revisions at least through the 1955 edition, which I used. Of the eight "true" functions, at least four are variations on the evangelistic theme. You may think I am talking about the past, but I insist it is the present. You know the Elmer Towns volumes on *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools* and *The World's Largest Sunday School.* Then there is the survey of 50,000 evangelical congregations, reported by Kenneth O. Gangel in *Christianity Today.* From that survey he concludes that "the Sunday School is alive and well." There were some problems he discovered in the approach of these congregations. "1) It offers a conscience-saving, though inadequate, alternative for parents who neglect Christian teaching at home. 2) It has focused too much on children and too little on adults. 3) It may have so emphasized evangelism that it has neglected nurture. 4) It too often is used as a substitute for a total Church program of nurture."[8]

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7. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, rev. ed. 1955.

8. "Emerging Patterns in Church Education," Christianity Today, Vol. XVII, No. 20, (July 6, 1973), p. 5.

The Sunday School exists to convert. That focus is clear. William Kennedy, now an educational executive of the World Council of Churches, has said that the Sunday School has moved in this century from concern with "the gathering of the saints" to concern for "the perfection of the saints." There have been moments, studying the new curriculum developments of the 1950's and 1960's, when I agreed. But I daresay that the "gathering of the saints," the evangelistic focus, is still more dominant, numerically speaking.

2. Training school for character

There is a little rank-ordering or voting exercise I have used on several occasions with church school teachers, parents, or adults concerned in some way with the educational enterprise. Take some words or phrases like conversion, personal growth, discipleship, learning to be good, and others, and ask which are top priorities for the Sunday School. Again and again, people place "learning to be good" at or near the top. People *expect* boys and girls to be taught to be good in Sunday School—honest, kind, truthful. I think of Ernest Ligon's Character Education projects and the materials developed to be used in character education. I think of morals, tacked on to the end of every Bible story. Of all the possibilities for interpretation of the Sunday School, this "training school for character" is the most problematic for me, both educationally and theologically. Being good, like being happy, is a by-product; taken as a goal, it is elusive and self-defeating. Besides, ethically, how *dare* anyone seek to produce in anyone else a certain quality or characteristic? Theologically, devotion to God and the purposes of God may eventuate in discipleship, faithfulness, obedience. Some of the work being done today, called moral education, certainly is to be distinguished from the older "character education" approaches; it cannot be contained within the Sunday School structures.

This image, which historically has been so powerful, may be less functional today. Our awareness of our own lack of moral health, individually and as a nation, may make us doubt the efficacy of this institution, the Sunday School, which, for years, has stood as at least a symbol of the desirability of being good. Very little of the glorious present is here, I think.

3. School

Some people do not even say Sunday School. They simply see and think and feel *school,* with all that it entails—curriculum,

administration, systems, teacher education, all the terms that are used in the public domain in connection with schooling. As to forms assumed by the school, at least twenty could be named in three minutes. One can find everything from a kind of miniature university with required core courses and electives, all on Sunday morning, to extension operations, like extension divisions of state universities, operating in conference centers, homes, offices. As to the organization of learning, again, many patterns are to be found —grades, learning centers, open classrooms, schools without walls. As to educational theory, these all exist. Martin Buber's description of education as a funnel, where teachers pour knowledge into their pupils, is operative, as is his contrasting description of education as a pump, where a teacher enables a student to become what he or she already is, in a kind of self-actualization. There may even be found Buber's own concept of education as dialogue. Certainly the affective and the cognitive domains are terms tossed about in connection with educational theory. But the umbrella, the unifying factor for all these diverse forms and theories, is the school. To have a "real" school—that is the twentieth-century dream of professional church educators. And if the school itself cannot bring in the kingdom, then innovations within the school can do it. Or teacher education programs can do it, if we can get just the right ones.

4. Function

Some people, probably many people, would say Sunday School is an anachronism. It is just a noun we use out of the past to designate a function of the church. The lay movement, of which I spoke in my second assumption, has in fact moved back into the life of the church as an integral part of it. The believing community, in maintaining its own life and outreach, nurtures its members, and the educational function is carried out in various ways—situational, intentional, relational. This is like much of what happens as a natural dimension of the life of the home. I read an article recently somewhere, maybe in *Harvard Educational Review,* entitled "The Pedagogy of Participation." The title is the only thing I remember. It captures the essence of this fourth option.

In the fall of 1973 there was a Consultation on Evaluating the Sunday School Contribution to Church Education in Europe. Participants were "highly critical of Christian education programs directed almost exclusively at the minds of children," although they recognized that most new curriculum materials were directed

toward teaching "the facts of the faith." Their conclusion was this: "We must no longer talk about Sunday School teaching, but about Christian nurture. Children are to be nurtured into the faith, not taught about it. Such nurturing can only occur as children take their proper place in the life of the loving, serving and worshipping Christian community."[9]

The term, then, is "Christian nurture," akin to, but not identical with, "church school" or "school of the church." It is the successor to the Sunday School, but also, in relation to our earliest history, a return to the way we were "educated" then.

5. Community of love

Is the Sunday School like a community of love? I am not content with that metaphor. First I wrote down fellowship. For many people, that is exactly what the Sunday School is, or what they most want it to be. In the United Methodist report on the church school, when people were asked what factor would most influence their choice of a new church home, over two-thirds checked "friendliness of the people." What did they want from their church school? Seventeen per cent wanted fellowship; only eight per cent wanted serious study.[10] In a Presbyterian Church, U.S., study of adults, most people (43 per cent) reported they attended the class they did because of fellowship; they felt that they belonged, they enjoyed one another. Only 18 per cent said they attended in order to learn.[11] Fellowship, not learning, is what is important. It is interesting that fellowship was even more important for churches of over 1,000 members, and/or located in the middle city. Small churches evidently have an advantage here.

This need to be known individually, to feel that one belongs, may be behind the human relations and sensitivity groups, the human potential groups, all the small groups with personal focus that have developed within the last twenty-five years. Many people see the Sunday School as an encounter group. I thought of using that term, but chose "community of love" as including the more traditional fellowship focus. Some of you may have seen the television production, "Circle of Love." The possibility of a small

9. "Christian Nurture: Consultation on Evaluating the Sunday School Contribution to Church Education in Europe," Education Newsletter, Office of Education, World Council of Churches, Vol. III, No. 1 (March 1974), p. 1.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

11. Margaret J. Thomas, *Survey of Adult Study Patterns Within the Church School of the Presbyterian Church, U. S.* Educational Research, Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U. S., 1969. p. 78.

group, already existing in the Sunday School class, is a natural for that "circle of love" to be undergirded by the Christian tradition and thus transformed into a genuine community.

6. Launching pad for dealing with social issues.

I am taking this term from the Methodist study. That is what six per cent of the people wanted the church school to be. It was not even mentioned in the Presbyterian Church, U.S., study, though to be honest I should say that questions dealt more with methods of teaching than with the purposes of the Sunday School. I think most denominations have a small minority of youth and adults who want to "do something" with the knowledge they have gained, who see ministry groups as replacing the Sunday School, who want their lives to make a difference. I remember an eloquent plea from a young lawyer whom I invited to serve on a panel in one of my classes. The question was: "What do you want from the professional leadership in your church?" His answer was something like this: "Help us to deal with crucial social issues in the light of our Christian faith. Who wants to wander in the wilderness with the Israelites for forty years when the world is falling to pieces? Isn't there some sequence, some progression? Isn't it possible to focus on some tasks in childhood, some in youth, and then to *build* on that in adulthood, with something distinctive? I don't want to sound pious. But I do want to serve Jesus Christ as my Lord." There are technical terms for what he was talking about, but the important thing here is his plea to turn the Sunday School class into a "launching pad for dealing with social issues."

7. An answer to every need

In the United Methodist study, 58 per cent gave a "multiple purposes" answer to the question about what the church school should be.[12] A Ford Foundation study report proposes that there are two approaches to reforming education in the city: the "add-on" model and the "spread-out" model.[13] I suggest that this seventh image includes both of these—add on activities and organizations, spread out the school to take care of all the interests of all the people. Everything that has not been said already about what the Sunday School is can be placed here.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

13. Edward Meade, Jr., "Models for Reforming Education in the City," Ford Foundation, Office of Reports, 1973.

Questions

Many questions could, and should, be raised about what I have said. I shall choose only two for reflection. First of all, what does all this amount to? Second, *is* the present glorious?

You have your own responses. Let me suggest some of mine. It is difficult to interpret the present. For some of us, the Sunday School is, in fact, not one thing, but many things. For some of us, there are strong implicit assumptions about what it is, assumptions coloring our reaction to proposals, programs, work we do. Those assumptions become perceptions shaping both present and future, as Ellis Nelson suggested in his statement that "the Sunday School is what you think it is." I would like to illustrate this "shaping" response to our perceptions by going back to my earlier statement about the lay movement—the strong ownership laity feel in the Sunday School movement. Several years ago a young minister who, evidently, had actually heard something in a Christian education class that gave him ideas about how he might carry out his office of teaching elder, made a proposal to the church he served. Instead of a new building, why not use limited facilities, abolish the Sunday School, add another professional to the staff, and let the two do all the teaching? A varied through-the-week schedule would make this possible. In the days following his proposal, he said that, although he had been a pastor in Mississippi during some bad racial tensions and had been "in trouble," nothing there even touched the intensity of emotion aroused by such an educational proposal in a "progressive" Virginia community. The plan *did* go through, the response was good, people said they were learning. But when the minister moved and the D.C.E. married and left, the congregation re-established the Sunday School, put up a building, and things are as they were.

Those people perceived the Sunday School as *theirs*, a fellowship, a school, with at least elements of evangelism. Often we professionals have operated at cross-purposes. We have imposed *our* image of a school, whereas I do believe that all the images I have mentioned are operative, as well as others, and should be taken seriously. More seriously, if you please, than innovation. More seriously than behavioral objectives, written in realistic, measurable, performance terms. More seriously than accountability. Or, rather, than the "modern" school version of accountability. Perhaps what I am talking about is accountability of a deeper dimension, an accountability that takes into account the kind of spiritual

hunger that is pointing to a vacuum which seems to exist, or that recognizes the longing for a kind of personal piety that may be behind the Gallup poll's findings that people are taking religion more seriously these days. But I am getting into the future.

Let us return to the present with the second question, *Is* the present "glorious"? Yes and no. No, when I think of how we rely on the latest fads to make it glorious—the behavioral objectives, simulation games, value-clarification, TA, PET, TET, a particular technology or program for teaching skills. One of my favorite persons, Charles Kraemer, former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, once quoted from someone else the comment that we were always in search of some unfailing infallible means of grace. That's true. We educators lead the record for the search. And the present is never glorious when we try to make the Sunday School infallible.

Nor is the present glorious when we are overcome with despair or hopelessness. What can we do in a mobile, pluralistic society, when we are in a minority group? The "glorious" Sunday School? The thought angers us. I think of what Norman Cousins wrote in an editorial last December: "The main trouble with despair is that it is self-fulfilling."[14] I remember one occasion in Covenant Life Curriculum days when past, present, and future came together in a kind of moment of despair. In a decision that had been made and had to be lived with, I suddenly realized that we were already out of date, that the future had impinged upon the present, which could not be changed. I could not announce that to a class, and undermine confidence and enthusiasm. Nor could I ignore realities. In a way, we who are here considering this "Confrontation: Sunday School" may be in precisely that moment of in-betweenness, of ambiguity, of tension, of being honest about our own convictions and involvement and yet being responsible to the "images" of those with whom we work.

Try this for another image, the one I choose for my answer to the question of whether the present is glorious. The Sunday School is a "badly organized miracle, through which God made grumbling participants into articulate messengers of the reformation truth that we survive by grace alone."[15] Albert van den Huevel, a leader in the ecumenical movement, quotes the late Hank Crane in that

14. "Hope and Practical Realities," Saturday Review/World, December 14, 1974, p. 4.

15. Albert van den Heuvel, "Don't You Demythologize My Central Committee," Risk, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1972). p. 50.

remark about a particular Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Hank Crane had a "refreshingly acid-tipped pen," van den Heuvel says. (So does van den Heuvel.) In his article, "Don't You Demythologize My Central Committee," he says, "Even if it is bad, it is better than nothing. Even if it is boring, it is exciting. Even if it is irresponsible, it is nice."[16] I may not "buy" all the adjectives as being applicable to the Sunday School, but the polarities of that with which I expect we are doomed and privileged to live do bring a certain fascination to the present.

Try one final statement in answer to our question, "Is the present glorious?."

> The Sunday School appears to take the character of an endless experiment. By the grandeur of its object, by the inexhaustible interests it touches, by the immortality of the souls it nourishes, as well as by the variety of conditions in which it exists, it is invested with this mystery and charm of an ever-unfinished enterprise. Its plan is never quite filled out. The hopes of its true-hearted friends run before their performance, and their aspirations are not realized. Its processes are all tentative. It works by an open pattern. A suspicion, which is probably wholesome, haunts us all that there is some secret about it not yet found out. An undertone of criticism, if not of complaint, can be heard in many of its reports. Greater things are felt to be in its possibilities than in its achievements; and the heart of every workman in it, that is worthy of his place, prophesies a future for it better than the past. Meantime, the consolation is that it is steadily striving to honor the Lord of the vineyard of whose spirit it sprang into life; and the support of its servants is that it gathers its annual harvest, of such as shall be saved, into the life everlasting.[17]

That statement is a direct quote from the Reverend F. D. Huntington, in an address delivered to the State Convention of Massachusetts Sunday School Teachers on June 13, 1860. I found it, rummaging around in the book stacks on a rainy, dreary Saturday afternoon, and succumbed to the temptation to draw on the past for the present. And I know of no better answer to the question, "*Is* the present glorious?" than to say "The Sunday School appears to take the character of an endless experiment." 1860. 1975. Who knows what is next?

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
17. F. D. Huntington, *The Relation of the Sunday School to the Church.* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1860), pp. 3-4.

Myths of the Modern Sunday School

by Richard Murray

Many people are convinced that the Sunday School in mainline Protestant churches is dead, but in Dallas, the city in which I live, the Sunday School is alive and kicking. On any given Sunday morning in the suburban churches of Highland Park or North Dallas hundreds of cars crowd the parking lots at the Sunday School hour.

Recently I taught at Spring Valley United Methodist Church in North Dallas. Each of those Sunday mornings I had to force my way down the hall, elbowing my way through a wall-to-wall crowd of children, youth and adults to get to my classroom. Once there, I found some forty adults ranging in age from mid twenties to early sixties who had come to take part in a series of lessons entitled "Ways of Studying the Bible." I wondered why these people thought it was worthwhile to jam into that small room for an hour with me. But there is no doubt in my mind that they were there because they wanted to be there and that they believed that this Sunday School class was worth their time and effort.

Although Sunday School attendance and membership in many United Methodist churches have fallen off drastically in recent years, it is not true that only sect type, conservative churches have healthy Sunday Schools. On the contrary, while many doubt that anything significant really happens in the Sunday School, it remains a thriving suburban, anglo phenomenon of major proportions, especially in the southeastern and southwestern portions of the United States.

But what *is* the Sunday School? A functional description suggests that the Sunday School is an organization within many churches in which children, youth and adults are divided into classes which meet for approximately one hour on Sunday mornings before, after or during a worship service. In these classes one or more teachers lead the participants in some combination of study and worship, based upon some printed curriculum resource. The

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members of these classes, by and large, enjoy being together and engage in a good bit of fellowship and attend primarily to promote and undergird many of its interests, as well as a wide variety of service projects in the church and community.

I both love and hate this Sunday School. As a local church minister of education, I used to hate how hard I had to work to recruit and train a steady stream of people who seemed to achieve so little. And yet I used to love and be stimulated by that steady stream of folks who thought it was worth coming to Sunday School and who appreciated my being there.

I am convinced that our Sunday Schools are extremely durable social institutions and that no matter what changes occur in the future, the Sunday School will continue much like it is. This will be true because the Sunday School provides a number of extremely useful benefits to a large number of people.

One of these is support for the belief that persons are doing what God wants to be done—namely, engaging in Christian community for the sake of Christian growth. While some men are in a class because their wives brow-beat them into coming, and many children are there because they were forced, most people attend Sunday School because they believe that this is what they ought to do and that while they are learning a little they do not have to work too hard to do so. For children another important benefit is a warm accepting community with much less discipline and a lot more personal attention than their weekday schools. Finally, for all ages, the Sunday School is a place for persons to assume leadership and feel needed. These are among some of the major reasons people continue to come to Sunday School week after week.

Another way to look at the present Sunday School is to consider realistically what it can and cannot do. While many illustrations could be used, I will mention only two.

First, the Sunday School cannot change the social views and behavior of its participants. It *can* share in exposing persons to various social needs and wrongs, the Gospel's impact or confrontation with those social needs and wrongs, ways in which some people are working to right those wrongs, and how they might share in that process. Often we expect the Sunday School to do what it can not possibly do, and we do not affirm it for doing what it can do and indeed has done.

Second, a Sunday School cannot provide a Christian education; it cannot teach what a Christian should know of the faith, the Bible, or anything else. What the Sunday School can do is to pro-

vide a series of engagements with the stories of the faith, excerpts from the documents of the faith, and some dialogue with persons in their faithful journey, past and present. By so doing the Sunday School can transform lives.

As I reflect on my fifty-one years in the Sunday School, thirty of those as a professional, I believe that one can say a lot about the Sunday School in the present by speaking about its "myths." My use of the term myth is not precisely correct, but what I mean by the term in this context is those ideas people hold which, while participating in the truth, are in fact largely false. In one sense, these myths point to tensions between two poles of a problem which is persistently present year after year. Some of these myths are held primarily by lay persons, others by church educators and ministers. In every case I have struggled with the truths contained in these myths, and in most cases I have been forced to change my mind over the years.

A first and basic myth is that "the Sunday School should be a real school in which instruction is paramount." Instruction is always present, learning does take place, but the Sunday School is basically groups sharing their faith. Church educators are often frustrated in their efforts to improve everything done in this lay school, going to great lengths to change structures, procedures and content to insure that better schooling can take place.

Because the Sunday morning sessions of the Sunday School are very resistant to such changes, professional educators tend to ignore the Sunday morning classes and turn their attention and energies to creating other forms of schooling—during the week, extended sessions, etc.—where they feel that "real" learning can take place. The problem is, how do we upgrade the teaching—learning interaction without destroying the warmth of community?

Another myth is "the way to improve the Sunday School and make it grow again is to hire a fulltime educator who has been trained in a seminary or a college where he or she has learned the knowledge and skills of Christian Education." While few would doubt that such an education usually helps, a high percentage of today's leading church educators are persons who learned on the job, or ministers who often did not ever take a single course in Christian education. The truth is this, if a professional educator is to help a Sunday School be its real self, this person needs to be a warm, patient person with an unlimited capacity for hard work, love, openness and toleration for ambiguity. Indeed, to help the

Sunday School grow it does not make any difference at all, in my observation, whether the educator has a theological education or not. At the Dallas "Confrontation: Sunday School," a lay person present said, "I am totally frustrated. The professionals in our group would not listen. I had valid points, but they are 'right' and 'know it all.' The key issue for the Sunday School is getting Christian educators to listen, really listen, and not humor us."

But it is also a myth that the Sunday School does not want or need professional help. I can remember vividly how grateful and excited the teachers in my Sunday School classes were when I would spend two days going through their curricular resources for the next quarter on my own and then meet with them for an evening and share my excitement about some Biblical and theological insights to which they had never been exposed. They were always grateful; they never wished I was not around, and, even though they sometimes disagreed with my understanding of the faith, they always appreciated the fact that I was dealing with them at a point where they had felt a need. I do not want to imply that that is the only way that we professionals can be of help, but I think it is certainly one.

Another myth is "that a Sunday School class or any other group of Christians must become a warm, personal community before any real Christian learning can take place." Contrary to this myth, a group of two hundred strangers will, if the conditions are right, learn a great deal. The truth is that it will not be worth the effort for such a large group to spend time getting to know each other. Many persons in a large class will never see each other again, and those who do will build their community through repeated associations. We have mistakenly equated *love* for the pupil with *knowing* the pupil well or liking everyone in the class. Phil Phenix at Teachers College in New York has said that "persons should teach as an expression of love," but we need not sentimentalize that statement. I was enrolled in a course he taught entitled "Ways of Knowing." I am sure I have never been in a more exciting course in my life. There were 95 of us in that class. About a third of them were nuns who wore huge habits, and one of the first things I learned was to arrive early so I could see the teacher. Professor Phenix knew few of our names, and we never became acquainted with each other. But he taught as an expression of his love, and every one of us knew that he loved us and he loved his work even though he did not know us. There was no doubt in any of our

minds that he had an extreme concern for us as persons and that we were a community of strangers working joyfully in a common task. That is why many adults in our Sunday Schools attend very large classes. They feel more community in a hundred people than they do in the give and take of ten. Often they are convinced that the teacher or other persons in that class care about them even though they do not know much about them.

The corollary to that myth is another which says that "only small classes can be intimate or only small churches can be warm or only small Sunday Schools can be close." I was raised in a church of several thousand members in Des Moines, Iowa, and have worked in churches of many thousand members, among them First United Methodist Church, Houston, and First United Methodist Church, Dallas. Often in the larger church there is more community than people believe. Why, even the portion of the balcony that I used to sit in at First Church in Dallas was a community. We did not ever say much to each other, but we knew when one was missing, and we came to know each other as valuable persons who sat in that part of the balcony.

Closely associated with size is what I believe is a most important reason sect-type church Sunday Schools grow and our mainline Sunday Schools sometimes do not. This is the *myth* that "it is un-Christian for any leader, especially a lay person, to stand out too much in his or her teaching." Team-teaching, this myth goes, is always to be preferred, and any person who is unwilling to try to teach as a part of a team is too egotistical to teach anyway. This is simply not true and can be a very destructive myth which causes untold harm in our Sunday Schools. As Phillips Brooks observed many years ago, "truth is known through personality," and this is also true of the truth of the Gospel epitomized in the fact that God chose to reveal Himself finally in a Person. We have mistakenly tried to inhibit God's major gift—a strange, sometimes obnoxious, individual person who in his or her own unique way often is extremely valuable in communicating the truth of the Gospel. Team-teaching *is* valuable, and recruiting persons to be a part of a team is often easier than recruiting a teacher to teach a class by himself or herself for a whole year, but the Sunday School has historically known in its bones that the warm charismatic person often shares the Gospel more persuasively than any team.

I am not saying we ought to dash home and do away with all of our teaching teams. I am saying explicitly and with emphasis

that many good Christian folk can do excellent Christian teaching in Sunday Schools by themselves and do not have to be in teams. Furthermore, those of us who are church professionals know we like to shine; why not let some others shine too!

I am convinced that most of you are not reading this article because God called you to read it; you are reading it because you want to and you want to because you get "strokes" out of doing a better job in your work in the Sunday School. We are in the church for rewards, and the rewards are intrinsic to our being, and we need to eat those rewards every morning for breakfast. The rewards of which I am speaking are praise and appreciation, satisfaction from a job decently done, and the response of people who tell us they really need us and are grateful to us. And we all know we appreciate their saying so. Yet we professionals are jealous of that teacher of a big adult class who attracts many who go home after the class rather than stay for church. We need to re-examine our doctrine of personhood, of that creature whom God made as a messenger and revealer of His own being.

Another myth: "Nothing significant can ever be done in thirty minutes, often all the time there is for a lesson on Sunday morning." The myth continues, "we must have more time: fifty minutes at a minimum and an hour and a half is preferable." The fact is that thirty minutes *is* enough for some significant things to happen *if* there is a sharp focus and you don't try to cover too much. If someone knows something and shares it; if persons get involved mentally, emotionally, or physically for any period of time; and if the Gospel is made present through the persons present, thirty minutes is enough. Often we urge our teachers to try to cover too much material or too many kinds of experiences. My theme song to improve the quality of the Sunday School is to *reduce* what happens. Do less and urge your leaders to do less, and do it more intensively and more personally.

There are a lot of myths concerning curriculum which are tied to this matter of time. One is: "people are going to study at home." We all know that this rarely happens, but the tragedy is that much of our curriculum material is still written with the assumption that it is going to be used outside the classroom. This is a policy which we should force our curriculum editors to change. We should demand that the editors and writers pay attention to the *real* Sunday School and to the fact that that curriculum will be used only during the class, if at all. Of course, there *are* bright exceptions. Sometimes it is the oldest ladies' class, and at other

times it is a group of "gung-ho" children in the elementary grades who are really swept up in their subject. Home study *does* happen, but our materials should be developed and written to be used in class only.

Another important myth which helps us understand our Sunday Schools as they really are, is—"the curriculum resources should have a carefully planned, sequential development which will be used Sunday after Sunday by participants who are regular in attendance." As we all know, this is hardly the case. Attendance of the vast majority of children, youth and adults is highly irregular, and it is simply not true that the experiences and ideas of a previous session can be depended upon for the following week.

The adult class which I taught recently at Spring Valley United Methodist Church was made up of persons who gave evidence that they were greatly interested in the subject, but only about one fourth of the class was present all of the five Sundays in the series, about half were there two or three of the sessions, and the rest attended only once. In today's Sunday School this is typical. The irregularity of attendance is not because they feel that the subject is insignificant or boring. The class members simply have other family and personal priorities which the church has taught them are important. We have taught church members to value family life, and with the opportunities for family recreation on weekends this means "don't go to church some Sundays, do other things."

This brings up another Sunday School myth concerned with teacher recruitment. The myth says—"every good Christian who is interested in teaching a class should be willing to teach for a full year—at a minimum, a quarter." Those who try to hold to this myth tend to feel that something is wrong with the Christian priorities and commitment of those who say that such a long time span is out of the question. The truth is that there are many people who are willing to lead a class for four to six weeks but who are unwilling or unable to set aside other aspects of business or personal life for a longer time. I am one of those persons. If a church wishes to use me as a teacher, it has to adjust to my schedule—I cannot fit into theirs. This is often hard for professional church educators and ministers to understand because *they* must be there every Sunday, but remember it is their job.

Another curriculum myth says—"many people reject the denominational curriculum resources because they do not have

enough Bible in them." In most cases, in my experience, this is not the real reason for the antagonism, and we do not help by counting the number of Biblical chapters or verses which are supposed to be covered by the lessons and telling people about them.

There are many complex reasons for not liking denominational material in the present day Sunday School. One of the major reasons for rejection (although seldom explicitly expressed) is because the format and art work are too different from what the adults in the church knew as children. The simple matter of asking people to read their Bibles rather than printing selected Bible verses in the material itself has caused great concern. Fear of trying unfamiliar methods and concern with a demand for too much individual creativity and time are also upsetting. It comes out, "we want more Bible," but the words most often point to something else.

Nevertheless, it is very important for us to listen carefully to the cry of those who say "we want more Bible in the curriculum" because they are really saying "we do not have a satisfactory way to deal with the faith and the Scriptures in our family and we want help!" As family stresses and strains increase, most Christians feel a great need to bring the data of the faith to bear upon their problems, and they desperately want the Sunday School to compensate for their own uncertainty.

Another myth, usually held primarily by professionals in church education, says—"only those portions of the Bible should be used with children which they can understand." Many lay persons in today's Sunday Schools fight back against such a myth, and I often wish to join them.

I do not fully understand the creation stories, even after hundreds of readings and much study, but they do help me know a good deal about the God of the Hebrews as well as a lot about the nature of men and women, including myself. At what age should we use such stories? I am very glad I was *exposed* to them long before I could "understand" them, otherwise I would be still waiting.

With the permeation of daily life by TV our children are exposed to most of the stories of the Bible as soon as they can sit up (often through re-runs of "The King of Kings"), and to believe that we should protect them from the gory details of the crucifixion until they are in third grade is quite unrealistic.

While a return to uniform lessons for *all* age groups would hardly be warranted, it does have its merits, but the closely graded

imitation of the public school also has both values and limitations. In any case, knowledge of and experience with most of the stories of the faith as found in the Bible are still important.

A final myth concerning curriculum resources is that "the curriculum resources used are crucially important and the use of the denominational materials is best." In any careful analysis of Sunday Schools, I am sure that the teacher will be very crucial and the particular materials used be unimportant. It is hardly an overstatement to say that 85 per cent of what is learned and experienced is traceable to the prejudices, knowledge, personality, and skills of the teacher. Much excellent material is grossly misused, and the Bible is often hardly heard because of untrained and unskilled leaders. One accurate description of today's Sunday School is that it spends far too much money and energy on the development of curriculum materials and far too little on the development of quality teachers.

A final myth, which in many ways is a key to all the rest, is sometimes expressed—"because the church is Christ's Church and the Sunday School is Christ's Sunday School, when something is said to be good for the Sunday School everybody should want to do it." Another way this myth can be stated is—"because the Sunday School is centered on Christ it should be pure and of one mind." This myth is institutionalized in the idea of a unified budget, but, as I seek for a broad descriptive explanation of the best Sunday Schools today, I would say they function as "an umbrella over a wide variety of sects." And the best professional church educator is *"a little shepherd of the sects."*

In contrast to the myth that everyone should do the same things in the same way for Christ's sake, we have today a proliferation of sects within our churches, each of whom is sure that the entire church or Sunday School should believe and behave as do they.

These sects range from the "group discussion is the only way to learn" type, to "Bible study is the only thing we ought to do" type. In many ways the youth, the social activists, the lay witness enthusiasts, and even the "let's not do or try too much" sects are typical in every church and Sunday School.

A sect is characterized by exclusiveness, purity, high standards of discipline, and a great desire to accomplish a task for the sake of God. Its members will often go to great lengths to convert others to their point-of-view and are usually quite blind to the virtues and values of other groups with other goals. All such sects

are sure the Sunday School would be a great institution if everybody was like them.

A Sunday School full of different sects may seem very fragmented and undesirable, but the alternatives also have problems. It would not be healthy to believe that the entire Sunday School should really act like one sect and anyone who does not want to do things that way can go somewhere else. Nor would it be wise to believe that the entire Sunday School should act like an inclusive church which tries to attract all kinds of people and never engages in much activity because there is no consensus, and without a consensus no peace and harmony.

The leader in today's Sunday School often finds himself or herself standing between the sects of the Sunday School trying to "shepherd" them all at the same time. Much time is spent just keeping one group from destroying another. That's not bad. A reasonable goal for such a leader and such a Sunday School would be to enable the sects to develop toleration for one another, and to hope that out of toleration would come understanding and some mutual trust which might end up in genuine love.

The Sunday School of the future will include a number of new elements and different approaches, but it is also going to be a lot like the Sunday School in all ages, in which earnest Christians will continue to be warm, sometimes bitter, often anxious, and engage in angry interchange because each wants to *"learn Christ"* in his or her own way. But the Sunday School will live on.

A Future for the Sunday School

by John H. Westerhoff

> Society exists through the process of transmission. This transmission occurs by the means of communication of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Education is the means of this social continuity of life.[1]
>
> John Dewey

When this conference was planned, I was asked to address "The Future of the Sunday School." My first thought was: that will be easy, there isn't any. Then, recalling the tenacity of the Sunday School in the face of similar prognoses, I found myself enticed by the challenge to face the future of the Sunday School afresh. However, after much struggle, all I had to show for my labors was a waste basket full of scraps. To speak of *the* future of the Sunday School pushed me toward prediction, but having no crystal ball, I was immobilized. Just as the Sunday School has many presents, it will surely have many futures. I changed the title of my address to "A Future for the Sunday School." That made my work more possible, though not more simple. To present a future is to possibly exert influence; that is an awesome responsibility. Through the years I have tried to convince those who will listen to me not to take too many notes. I have always been wary of giving the impression that I know and others do not. In my experience that simply is not true. I am quite aware that I have sometimes been wrong and often changed my mind. Nevertheless I have accepted this assignment, and I do want you to take my remarks seriously, if not authoritatively. Thoughts about the future can too easily be believed or discarded; neither is wise.

Today I plan to speak of *a* future for the Sunday School, but what sort of future do I have in mind? Is it the future I think *can be,* based upon an analysis of the present; the future I think is *apt to be,* based upon projections of current trends; or the future I *hope will be,* based upon my personal dreams? I have chosen a Sunday School I desire, but also a Sunday School I think can be and indeed is quite likely to be. Of course, you will have

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1. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p 3.

to judge whether my imagination has taken over for my reason, and also whether or not you can share my commitments. In any case, my intention is not to sell you on my hoped for anticipations, but to stimulate you to envision for yourselves.

Let me therefore begin with a warning. Don't expect too much from this address. Thinking about the future is too important to be left to one or even a group of academics or denominational executives. The future is everyone's business. And the future of the Sunday School is uniquely the responsibility of congregations, of the laity and their educational leaders. Sometimes I fear that local churches, while wildly objecting, will let themselves be carried into the future by the words and actions of national decision makers rather than by their own prayed-through convictions. Therefore I encourage you to reflect critically upon my remarks and not too easily accept any of my conclusions. Futurists, academics and denominational executives can be fools.

L. F. Senabaugh, onetime Methodist Superintendent of the Department of Teacher Training for the Virginia Conference Sunday School Board, in 1930 penned a training manual, the first chapter of which he entitled "Making the Old Sunday School New." Senabaugh began:

> The story is told that when the board of directors of a great railway system determined upon building a new terminal station in an eastern city to meet the new needs of their business, they called in certain engineers and architects and gave instructions for the drawing of plans for the great building. The plans were finally completed, the board of directors was in session, the engineers and architects had made their report, and a vote was to be taken ordering the construction to begin, when the superintendent of transportation arose from his place at the directors' table and asked the question, 'Gentlemen, you are planning to build these new buildings on the site of the old ones. It will take years to complete this task. What do you propose to do with the traffic that we now have while the new building is being erected?' This question made it necessary to draw new plans that would permit traffic to continue uninterrupted while the new building took the place of the old.[2]

That story provides a necessary prolegomenon for my remarks. As many of you know, for some time I have questioned the relevance of the "schooling-instructional" paradigm which has dominated church education since the turn of the century. You also know that I am committed to the construction of an alternative paradigm. While I am beginning to get a clear picture of a new

2. L. F. Senabaugh, *The Small Sunday School* (Nashville, Tenn.: Cokesbury, 1930), p. 20.

way to think about church education, in recent days I have also become aware of the need for some interim plans. I realize the importance of Mr. Senabaugh's parable. While we strive to build an alternative future for the church's educational mission and ministry, the process of education must, and indeed will, go on. To pronounce an Illichian benediction over the Sunday School is both immature and irresponsible. And so on with the problem.

Part of a Whole

Recall, there was a joke at the turn of the century. It began with a question. "When is a school not a school?" The answer, "When it is a Sunday School!" In response to that bit of scathing humor, many of us endeavored to make the Sunday School into a significant educational institution, that is, one modeled after the best of our public schools. Perhaps that was an error. Surely the Sunday School is most alive and flourishing today in those churches which never joined in that effort. It appears that the Sunday School, as John Wesley suggested, is best suited to be "a nursery for the church," that is, a place where the faithful endeavor to build community, sustain and transmit their heritage, and bring others to faith. That may not be all there is to church education, but it is foundational and characteristic of what a Sunday School seems best able to contribute to the church's educational ministry.

The church is an intentional community with a shared cumulative tradition within which persons can experience and reflect on Christian faith, make conscious decisions for or against the faith, and be both equipped and stimulated for apostleship in the world. Church education is a process of interaction between and among the generations within a community of faith. Through various and diverse deliberate, systematic and sustained efforts it has as its goal the growth and development of individual and corporate faithing selves. The Sunday School can provide *one* context for church education, an environment where people can strive to be Christian together as they become conscious of their identity as a tradition-bearing community of faith. The Sunday School can not and never will be all of church education, but it appears well suited for one important ingredient in the church's educational ministry. That is not a new idea.

In 1905 John Vincent, the great Methodist leader of the Sunday School movement, then in his later years, gave an address at the Eleventh International Sunday School Convention in Toronto,

Canada. Having accepted an assignment much like my own, he entitled his address, "A Forward Look For the Sunday School." Vincent began by saying he was going "to dream of things that are to be."[3] (That's more than I have claimed.) However, before he revealed his dream, he made an important observation:

> It is possible in our day to make too much of method, of recent educational theories, of curricula, and merely intellectual training. The Sunday school in its desire to gratify modern educators is in danger of making a blunder and of sacrificing good things that are old. . . .[4]

Then he made his prediction. In the future, the Sunday School will be less of a school and more of a home. Its program will be more like the past; it will focus on conversation and the interaction of people, rather than the academic study of the Bible or theology. The Sunday School will be a place where friends deeply concerned about the faith will gather for conversation and living, for reflection and action. Next Vincent interestingly pointed out, "We must remember that the Sunday school is not the whole of the church, nor does it cover all the educational functions of the church."[5] The church school, he suggested, ought to be the name of the total educational effort, and its goal will be to enable people to apply the truths of God to their individual and corporate lives, and thereby join with all social reformers who dream of a Christian civilization and wish to contribute to that vision. The church school will, he continued,

> promote unification and completeness in the various agencies that make for symmetrical education: the family, the pulpit, the pastorate, the Sunday school, the public school, the college, the libraries, the philanthropic and reformatory organizations, the literary and reading circles, and the societies for the study of the Bible and social problems.[6]

And then, commenting again on the Sunday School, he closed with these words: "As I look, it appears to be a vision of a noble future. I look again and I find it the reflection of an actual past . . ."[7]

Notice, in Vincent's dream, the distinction he notes between what he calls the church school, or the overarching educational program of the church, and the Sunday School, which he sees as one piece in that larger program. My own thoughts parallel his.

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3. John Vincent, "A Forward Look For the Sunday School" in *Eleventh International Sunday School Convention* (Boston, Mass.: Executive Committee of International S. S. Assn., 1905), p. 166.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

From one perspective, then, there will be little new in my position; from another perspective, however, the difference is significant. Consider the best of Christian Education literature in the '40's, '50's, and '60's. In most cases, a point was made of the importance of the many facets of learning present in the church. As soon as this point had been made, however, these authors began to emphasize the place of a school in the church. The result was disastrous. Church educators focused their major attention on schools, attempting to build comprehensive educational programs within them.

I want clearly and forcefully to disassociate myself from that error. The Sunday School will never be more than a very small piece in a comprehensive educational program. The professional educators can never again permit themselves to become the guardians of the Sunday School. Instead they need to provide leadership for the church's total educational ministry. The Sunday School will only be adequate for reaching limited goals, goals primarily aimed at the needs of children six to twelve years of age. Totally new, not yet existent, programs of youth and adult education are needed. Likewise, planning for church education will necessitate a de-emphasis on schooling. Only if we engage in new forms of education involving the total life of a faith community will we in our churches be able to establish an adequate educational program. As part of that larger program, however, a new-old intergenerational Sunday School can make an important contribution. But remember, unless we have new additional programs for youth and adults, the Sunday School of which I am speaking will be unsuccessful. Indeed, the greatest educational challenge we face is evolving significant programs of education with youth and adults. I regret that I see no viable future for the Sunday School in meeting the advanced faith development needs of either, except in so far as youth and adults also have a need to interact religiously with children and share with them their lives of faith. *If,* and I emphasize that again, we establish new non-schooling programs for youth and adults and engage more mindfully in holistic church education, then there is a role for the Sunday School, a role especially important in meeting foundational faith needs for all ages. With those important qualifications, I turn to a future for the Sunday School.

I will attempt to describe what might be called a futurible Sunday School, that is a Sunday School not now realized, but one

which can be conceived to be existing in the near future because it has value to a significant number of persons who are equipped with the necessary skills to build it. Further, I believe that the futurible Sunday School I plan to describe will meet both some essential needs of church education in the next decade and provide a continuing context for foundational church education within the alternative paradigm I am in the process of creating.

Reconsidering the Past

What might shock some of you is that my model for a futurible Sunday School is more like the earlier Sunday School than our contemporary church school. Recall that the church school was modeled after the public school. I contend that that was a mistake. Because some of us deplored the Sunday School's theology, we tried to discard one of the most significant religious educational institutions in modern history. Until aspects of the old Sunday School are reintroduced, the church will lack a necessary dynamic for life in a secular world. That may appear to be a strange position for me to take, but review our most recent past.

Following the lead of the public schools, we professional church educators tried to create church schools, new educational institutions. Soon they became divorced from church life. Rarely were they able to meet the needs of any but our large, sophisticated, suburban churches. And typically they relegated church educators to an island of instruction with children and youth. The church school did give professional identity, just as it theoretically provided a context for engaging in quality education. Yet rarely did it become the school of the people or a natural expression of any faith community's life. The old Sunday School was different. It was at the center of the church's life, it had the loyalty and commitment of its people, and it met basic religious needs of all.

During the last few months I have visited a number of large dynamic mainline liberal churches with professional staffs. In Charlotte, North Carolina, I found one of those rare churches where the dream of the perfect church school was actualized. All their teachers were trained. They had developed an exemplary curriculum. Their educational plant, equipment, supplies and organization would make many public schools envious. Yet they have evaluated their achievements and found them lacking. The modern church school, at its very best, is less than adequate. The laity and the professionals in these churches want to know what they can do to bring vitality back into their Sunday Church School.

Recently I also discovered the massive world of the small church. For a professional educator it was common to ignore these thousands of churches. I, like numerous other church educators, got used to talking about educational plants, supplies, equipment, curricula, teacher training, closely graded classes and learning centers with individualized instruction or some other current educational enthusiasm. Lately I have been confronted by churches which share a pastor, more than likely will never have the services of a professional church educator, have at best a couple of small rooms attached to their church building, no audio-visual equipment, few supplies, an inadequate number of potential teachers, and not enough children for age-graded classes. Yet in these churches the Sunday School is still the heart of the church's life. The Sunday School Superintendent is the lay pastor and true leader of the congregation. If it were not for the Sunday School, these churches might have died long ago. Nevertheless Sunday Schools in these small mainline churches are sick, sick in part because they have tried to become modern church schools and failed. The Sunday School statistics board in the front of their churches dramatizes their situation and has resulted in depression. Denominational programs, many of which they are often unable to use, bring on feelings of inadequacy and failure. (And remember, 85 per cent of all Methodist churches have less than 300 members, and 75 per cent of Methodist Sunday Schools have less than 100 members.)

In the last months I have been working with some of these churches, small Methodist parishes in Caswell County of North Carolina. When they asked me to help them, they stated their problem in this way: "The Sunday School was always at the heart of our church. Now it is sick and the whole church is sick. Where have we gone wrong? What should we do?"

I recall facing a similar series of questions a few years ago. At the time I was the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries liaison person with our churches in Hawaii. On one of my visits I met with the members of a number of our small pure Hawaiian churches. They still called their church schools Sunday Schools, though through the years they had obediently and faithfully tried to develop a Christian education program like those recommended by the church's educational professionals. They struggled to raise money to build classrooms; they bought the denominational curriculum and sent their people to teacher training workshops and lab schools. Still, attendance dropped, teachers were difficult to

secure, and more seriously the faith was not adequately transmitted. They asked me why they were failing. I was stumped. They were doing everything we had suggested, yet they were unsuccessful. In desperation I asked them to tell me about the days when they were succeeding. And they did. They explained how many of their churches used to gather each Sunday afternoon for a *luau*. Young and old came together to dramatize Bible stories, sing hymns, witness to their faith, discuss their lives as Christians, eat and have fellowship together. They did almost everything natural to their culture except dance; we taught them that was immoral. When they finished describing their old Sunday School, I suggested they return to having *luaus*.

Well, following on what I learned in Hawaii, I asked the people in the Caswell County churches to share their faith-biographies. How did they come to be the persons of faith or unfaith they are now? As each shared her or his life story, we listed the most significant influences and situations in their growth and development of faith. People told of homecomings, family gatherings, revivals, of picnics and pageants, of choirs and fellowship, of caring, helping, and witnessing, but most of all, they described the persons whose lives had touched theirs and with whom they had shared significant moments.

We then discussed hopes for their families, their children, their youth, themselves, their church, and their community. Their list included knowing the story of our faith, experiencing that faith, being a faithful community, witnessing to the faith, being more Christian in their daily lives, building a better world, and making their community more Christian. We called their hopes goals, and their faith-biography discoveries strategies. Together, then, we framed a life for their Sunday Schools, a life that creatively brought together their goals and strategies. Their plan, while in some ways very contemporary, had much in common with the best of the old Sunday School. I told them that, and we celebrated. Once again they had a vision, hope and a plan. They didn't need new buildings, curriculum, or the equipment and supplies of the modern church school. They didn't need to train a host of teachers for age-graded classes or learning centers which for them could never be. But they could be a faithful community; they could sustain and transmit their faith; they could provide a place where persons might experience and act out their Christian faith. They had begun to build a new-old Sunday School. They were liberated from the

oppressions of an educational program they could never adapt to their situation, and they had begun to determine their own future as a faithful Christian community.

Now I don't want you to think that I have become an uncritical, nostalgic romantic, who in these difficult days has decided to return to the womb or a past that never was. For years I was part of the movement to reform the Sunday School by building it into a modern church school, like unto the best of our public schools. Then I went through a stage of critically judging this whole endeavor and even suggested that neither a church school nor Sunday School was necessary. Neither in retrospect seems reasonable. Now I want to renew the Sunday School as one piece of an educational design, and my model for that renewal is found in some of the characteristics of the old Sunday School. Of course, the theology of the old big-little school I do not share. Nor do I uncritically accept its pedagogy. I affirm a liberation theology which unites the truths of both liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, and I am grounded in the insights of the best of the progressive tradition, of John Dewey and George Albert Coe. Nevertheless I believe that we have in the old Sunday School a basis for the genesis of a new Sunday School, relevant to the future, to liberation theology, progressive education, and our mainline churches.

Old Images and New

In 1816 J. A. James wrote *The Sunday School Teacher's Guide.* He opened with a conviction:

> Teaching religion is something more than giving instruction. The accumulation of Biblical facts and figures and the memorization of passages of Scripture are merely a small part of religious training. . . . Teaching is not to be an end in itself, but a means to an end, and that end that we seek is right living. . . .[8]

James went on to describe the Sunday Schools he knew best. He first told of children, youth and adults preparing for and celebrating special occasions, such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Missionary Day, and Decision Day. In a chapter entitled "We Learn By Doing" he described life in the Sunday School. He included plays and musicals, games, hikes and hunts, parties and picnics, social service projects and community activities, all with children, youth, parents and grandparents participating together.

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8. J. A. James, *The Sunday School Teacher's Guide* (New York: The Female Union Society for the Growth of Sabbath Schools, 1816), pp. 83-84.

At Duke we have a fascinating collection of local English Methodist Sunday School histories. Typical is the history of the Lincoln Fields Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School and Society. It tells of a Sunday School with string bands and choirs and with a host of societies: some for social improvement, the care of the sick, mothers of young children, support of libraries and the writing of tracts. The function of the Sunday School described in these histories, with their variety of programs, was to provide persons with an opportunity to experience the faith, acquire the tradition, and learn what it meant to act as Christians. The key to these Sunday Schools was not curriculum, teaching strategies, or organization; it was people.

Benjamin Jacob, the Baptist layman who helped to transform the Sunday School into a world-wide movement, spoke of teaching as leading others, by example, on the road to spiritual maturity.[9] Children, he pointed out, may or may not study their Bibles as diligently as desired, but they will study the lives of the adults they meet in the church. Teachers, therefore, must be models of what they desire others to become; they are to be spiritual mentors, not instructors.

In 1887 John Vincent wrote *The Modern Sunday School.*

> The Sunday school is a modern title for an ancient and apostolic service of the church. It is a school first and foremost for disciples. It is a school with a master, the teacher, and with his disciples gathered around him.[10]

Vincent presents in this little book a variety of roles a teacher might play: he can entertain his pupils and keep them happy; he can work at winning their admiration; he can make them into good scholars who know the Bible and the church's doctrines. Vincent accepts none of these. Instead, he lists the spiritual qualities needed by a teacher so that he may aid in the spiritual growth and development of those he meets. A number of years later Senabaugh wrote in a similar vein:

> Surely not just anyone can teach, for religion is caught more than taught and we cannot teach what we do not know. Religion is an experience and we cannot fully teach anything that we have not verified. The teacher may teach about Christianity but if he is to teach Christ he must live in fellowship with him.[11]

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9. See John Westerhoff, "Models of Teaching for Religious Faith," The Religious Educator, Sept. 1974.

10. John Vincent, *The Modern Sunday School* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1887), p. 32.

11. L. F. Senabaugh, *The Small Church School,* p. 39.

The old Sunday School appears to have cared most about creating an environment where people can be religious together, where persons can experience Christian faith and see it witnessed to in the lives of significant others. The old Sunday School seemed to be aware of the importance of the affections, of story telling, of experience, of community building, and of role models. While many of these concerns remain in the rhetoric of the modern church school movement, we seem to have created an institution more concerned with teaching strategies, instructional gimmicks and curricular resources than spiritual mentors; more concerned with age-graded classes for cognitive growth than communities concerned with the affections, more concerned with the goals of knowing *about* the Bible, theology and church history than communities experiencing and acting upon the faith.

That may be unfair to the modern church school and a fiction of the old Sunday School, but I think that most of us in our mainline churches are aware of how little of the story we know and how empty our moral and spiritual lives have become.[12] Verbal language, both spoken and written, has dominated Christian education for too long. Perhaps as far as Christian faith is concerned, we have attached too literal an interpretation to the primacy of the Word. By sanctifying the oral and verbal traditions we have lost something of the richness of the early church where the great truths of the community were enshrined in myth and symbol.

We humans have been granted two major modes of consciousness. One is analytical and the other is holistic; one is rational and the other intuitive. Each is complementary, and the spiritual life depends upon their complementarity. Yet with our emphasis on abstract reasoning and formal thinking we have tended to let the intuitive, creative mode of our consciousness atrophy.

Prayer and the spiritual life require that we regain our God-given ability to wonder and create, to dream and fantasize, to imagine and envision. We need to be encouraged once again to sing, dance, paint, and act. We need to cultivate our capacities for ecstasy, for appreciating the new, the marvelous, and the mysterious. Sensual awareness and the ability to express ourselves emotionally and non-verbally need encouragement. The affections are as always at the heart of the life of faith. The old Sunday School seems to have known that.

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12. See John Westerhoff, "Learning and Prayer" in Religious Education, May-June, 1975.

But the affections are not enough. There is another foundational need to the spiritual life: an historical awareness. Regretfully, we seem to live in an a-historical time. People have been taught history as a meaningless collection of dates, names, and places, as external happenings involving others in another time. Christian faith, however, is founded upon an historicist perspective. Only when the past becomes present and personal does it have any power over our lives. To internalize our history, we need once again to become a story-telling people. We must find a way to tell the story as our story. The old Sunday School took that concern seriously. People knew and cared about the story; it was theirs and they wanted to pass it on. Their understanding and use of scripture may, from our perspective, have been inadequate, but their concern for community, the affections, the story and the witness of spiritual mentors needs to be emphasized again. And the good news is that here and there these needs are being creatively addressed. A new-old Sunday School is emerging.

Framing the New-Old School

Let me describe what I see, but first a few generalizations. My new-old Sunday School may or may not meet on Sundays, and it may or may not meet every week. When it does meet, it brings together children, youth and adults for common activities. Music, dance, drama, the plastic arts, and film-making provide the dominant forms of expression. Integral to its life is celebration, the focus of its program is the Christian story, and its primary concern is for opportunities to be religious together.

The following examples are all based upon real churches. None employs professional educators; each has under 300 members and represents a different denomination. My first is a small New England congregation. At a church meeting each year the people decide on a series of themes for their Sunday School. Last year they chose Moses and the Exodus, Advent—Christmas, Contemporary Christians, and Life in the Early Church. The Sunday School meets intergenerationally for four blocks of time during the year. Each thematic unit is assigned to a group of families. They create and lead the Sunday School for that period. The first block of time runs from the first day of school through Thanksgiving. During the summer those who were interested prepared a dramatization of episodes in Moses' life. In the first week of Sunday School they presented their dramatization. During the next week

interest groups were formed. There was an opportunity to make unleavened bread, to create poetry of modern parallels to Moses' experience, and there was an art group to illustrate the poetry. Other activities were taken from *The Jewish Catalogue,*[13] one of the truly great resources for religious education and a good example of the sort of resources needed for the Sunday School of the future. There was even a group who used the dark, dirt-filled junk-strewn basement of the church to create a simulation of the Israelites' faith during the darkness of the long exodus. Two weeks of such activities led to two weeks of planning for a Sedar, using Waskow's *Freedom Sedar*[14] as the basis for their celebration. At last they united for that special occasion. This was followed by two weeks of preparation for a special Thanksgiving celebration. Here was an opportunity to identify their Congregational Puritan history with the Exodus. The unit ended with a grand Thanksgiving celebration, at which five grains of corn were put at everyone's place, a child asked why, and the story of the one year when that was all their forefathers and foremothers had to give thanks for was told. After a few weeks people were ready to begin their Advent-Christmas theme.

A mid-West Sunday School uses the church lectionary to determine their Sunday School program. Each week the scripture lesson read in church is used as the text for the sermon and as the focus of the Sunday School hour. The week I observed, the lesson was Romans 5:20: "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The theme was "You are Accepted." In this particular church people from twelve years of age up volunteer to be responsible for organizing diverse activities around the theme. They get together the week before and plan. On this week, after they sang some hymns and folk songs, the lesson for the day was read, and various activities were announced. One teen-age girl said that she wanted to talk about acceptance and paint pictures. A group of about ten gathered around a table she had set up in the hall. They talked about those in the community who were not accepted, and she commented that the Christian church accepts everyone, even if they don't deserve it. Then she suggested they all paint pictures. Most drew Indians, representing those not accepted, but one boy

13. Richard Siegel, Strassfeld & Strassfeld, *Jewish Catalogue* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973).

14. Arthur Waskow, *The Freedom Sedar* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969).

drew a tremendous monster urinating. The girl, in a validating manner, praised all the pictures and put them up on the wall. I watched the boy's face and saw it light up. I suspect that he had set out to test her statement that the Christian church accepts everyone, and as a result of her marvelously gracious act he had experienced grace.

In the same church that week another scene was occurring. One little boy spent the whole time destroying other people's work. No one felt that he or she handled the situation very well. During the break between Sunday School and family worship the leaders for the week gather to reflect on their experiences while the rest of the congregation engages in fellowship and recreation. Today this boy was the focus of their concern. One of the adults asked if anyone knew what might be the matter. "Sure," said a teen-ager; "he wants attention." Well, what were they going to do about that? "Let's divide him up," one junior high girl suggested. "That is," she explained, "let's each one of us take him for a week and be his special friend and give him all the attention he needs." They did, and that young boy also experienced grace; it would not be too dramatic to say that someday, when recalling his memories of the Sunday School, he will tell about this experience.

There is another church on the west coast whose Christian education committee decided that it wanted to give a rebirth to their Sunday School. They were tired of cajoling people to teach, and they were disturbed that children had stopped coming. So they ditched their curriculum and decided to focus on drama, art and music. Someone remembered reading about the old Medieval plays which used to enact principal episodes from the Old and New Testament. In Medieval times the plays were undertaken by the crafts guilds, analogous to our present day trade unions. When possible, the guilds presented plays that dealt with themes associated with their craft: the bakers presented the Last Supper, the goldsmiths the Adoration of the Magi, the shipwrights the Noah play, and so on. All the actors were amateurs, and scripts were usually not necessary because most of the players were illiterate. This particular church had families sign up in groups according to their favorite pastimes. There were the mountain climbers, the sailors, the gourmet cooks, the musicians and so forth. Each group was given a Biblical episode to work on in any way and at any time it chose. They were told to create two dramas, one of the Biblical story and one a contemporary expression of the story. Planning the drama was to be half the fun, and everyone was to

have a part. There were costumes and props to be made and parts to be learned. Then on the weeks during Lent everyone gathered so that each group could present its play and involve everyone in the action. Each was followed by discussion and refreshments. The plays went so well that they have decided to do it again next year.

There is one last Southern church I'd like to mention. This church chose the church year as its organizing principle. Activities were to be created which would help the congregation prepare for each season of the church year. A season was assigned to some existing group or organization in the church. The youth group was responsible for Pentecost. They created an interesting group of activities for the weeks before Pentecost, and every child, youth, and adult chose a group to participate in. One group planned to bake and decorate a mammoth birthday cake for the church. Another made banners for a parade symbolizing the works of the Holy Spirit. Another made ceramic medallions to be given to those persons who renewed their confirmation vows at the Pentecost celebration. Some worked on original vocal and instrumental music and others on a dramatic production of the Acts account of Pentecost. A last group designed and planned games from around the world for the birthday party of the church. On Pentecost they united their labors into a fantastic celebration.

My examples could go on. Many of you have your own living examples to witness to; of course each has its limitations, but my imagination and yours could construct a hundred others. You will find little pieces of the old Sunday School in each of these modern creations, and those of you familiar with Dewey's idea of a school can also sense glimmers of the pedagogical insights of the progressive era. And so we have a new-old Sunday School, a Sunday School of my future.

A Theological Undergirding

One issue, however, still remains. The Sunday School historically was an expression of evangelical theology, and where it thrives today in the ten largest Sunday Schools, some forms of that theology still persist. The question must be raised, what will be the theology of my new-old Sunday School? It would be well for us to remember the book my colleague H. Shelton Smith wrote in 1940, *Faith and Nurture*.[15] In that book he confronted himself and other religious educators with the dissonance between

15. H. Shelton Smith, *Faith and Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1954).

theology and pedagogy. He called for a new synthesis. Any future for the Sunday School will have to address numerous theological issues. I have, but I am not sure if my conceptualization is hopeful or anticipatory. There is no time for a long theological discourse, but I would like to suggest an outline of a theological pedagogy for the new-old Sunday School, one which is consistent with the best of evangelical theology and the social gospel. It goes back to the work of George Albert Coe, who is, in my estimation, the most significant person in the history of church education. His book, *A Social Theory of Religious Education,* has influenced me more than any educational work. In 1916 he wrote:

> The aims and methods of Christian education, as of church life in general that this generation inherited, were predominantly individualistic. But . . . the redemptive mission of Christianity is nothing less than that of transforming the social order. The duty of making Christian education Christian will mean bringing it into line with this social message.[16]

We continue to suffer from the same malaise. Christianity is to be focused upon the kingdom of God; it is to live by a radical community consciousness. Christian education at its best aims at the transmission of a tradition that calls for the continuing reconstruction of society.

As Bob Lynn, my mentor, has pointed out on numerous occasions, the Sunday School was once an instrument of mission for the total reform of society. Too often, however, our educational programs have led persons to a life of mere inwardness, of personal piety, thus blessing the existing social, political and economic order regardless of the serious injustices it may perpetuate. Liberal theology and neo-orthodoxy have come together in liberation theology.

I will always be indebted to my friend James Luther Adams, who taught me many years ago that the covenant of the people of God with the Lord of history entails responsibility for the total character of society. Pietism is a turning from the God of Christian faith, a denial of the sovereignty of God over the whole of life, and thus a form of idolatry.

According to our Christian story, the power of God was working in its most characteristic and decisive way when our foremothers and forefathers were being liberated from bondage in Egypt. Indeed, the appearance of Jesus Christ and the birth of

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16. George Albert Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1917), p. 6.

the church was the second great Exodus. It is the restriction of religion to the immediate relations between an individual and God and to interpersonal relations, believing that institutions will take care of themselves if people have personal faith, that is a denial of our faith. If we transmit our story more fully and faithfully, we surely will become aware that the kingdom of God is a call for the transformation of the whole of life.

Let us never believe that the church is what it is supposed to be. We live privatized lives which deny corporate selfhood. We need to be liberated from ourselves so that we can identify with those who are oppressed. The Christian religious establishment in which we conduct our Sunday Schools stands under judgment. We need to become sensitive to our potential for corporate selfhood through the telling and retelling of our story, the story of God's action in history and our call to the cost and joy of discipleship.[17]

Our programs in the new-old Sunday School need to aid us in thinking, feeling, and acting socially. As Coe suggested, our focus must be on social welfare (ecology, health care, quality education, housing, a guaranteed income and so forth), on social justice (overcoming racism, sexism, and classism), and world society (peace and whole community). The consequence of ignoring such issues causes people to struggle against forces inside themselves and not see or combat the social, political and economic sources of our problems; it causes introversion and an over-concern for the inner life in relationship to an other-worldly God rather than the God of history, the incarnate God of political kingdom building. It also makes church activities assume undue importance as compared with the church's influence on the world, and in the end it causes people to separate religion and life.

For the last few years I have worked with the United Church of Christ on the Shalom curriculum, really a non-curriculum consistent with the needs of the new-old Sunday School. It provides us with some of the tools to bring a social theory of religious education and liberation theology together. The Biblical notion of God acting in history and the nature of His/Her intentions for the world can be experienced and interpreted; ecumenical environments which enable us to identify with the oppressed and facilitate a commitment to resist life as it is can be created. We can celebrate the vision of God's kingdom. We can help children learn to deal

17. See Frederick Herzog, *Liberation Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972).

creatively with conflict, aggression, possession and the distribution of scarce resources. We can play and live together in ways that stress cooperation over competition, community over individualism and non-aggression over aggression. We can enable persons to acquire new racial and sex role images rather than harmful stereotypes. Children can begin to experience the reality of world community, the nature of justice, and role models of the people of God who act with God in His/Her kingdom building. And all of this can be accomplished in a community of faith striving to learn and transmit its story, for that story is the drama of God's continuing deeds in history, which parenthetically is also "her story." As the old hymn goes,

> We've a story to tell to the nations
> That shall turn their hearts to the right,
> A story of truth and mercy,
> A story of peace and light. . . .
> For the darkness shall turn to the dawning
> And the dawning to noon-day bright,
> And Christ's great Kingdom shall come on earth,
> The kingdom of love and light.[18]

What is the story we have to tell? It is a story of a vision of the mighty acts of God, of signs of the vision realized and of hope; it is a story of judgment and grace, of estrangement and wholeness, of selfish denials and conversion, of darkness and light, and of an open future.

Last Thoughts

As you see, I believe there is a future for the Sunday School in our liberal mainline denominational churches. My new-old Sunday School, providing one piece of the church's educational program, will meet at various times on a regular or irregular schedule. It will be intergenerational though its focus will be the needs of children. Youth and adults will have other non-schooling educational programs, and the church's total life will be seen as the context for Christian education. The new-old Sunday School will, through the use of the arts, center on the affections and will aim to transmit through word-in-deed the Christian story and way of life as our story and our way of life. Curriculum for the Sunday School will be increasingly planned and designed locally; resources will be gathered from diverse sources. The Biblical story will be

18. Colin Sterne, "We've A Story to Tell" in *The Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1939), No. 501.

central and transmitted in both word and deed. The laity will once again find themselves leading in the exciting adventure of sustaining and transmitting through community activities the cumulative tradition of the Christian faith. The church school with its denominational curriculum built around teachers meeting weekly with pupils in enclosed classrooms and following closely graded lessons will slowly pass away, and in its place a new-old Sunday School will emerge, providing through celebration, experience and action, opportunities for the community of faith to sustain and transmit its tradition—its story of God's liberating action within history—to meet the needs of persons for a belonging and caring fellowship, and to provide the foundations for our vocation in society as God's Kingdom builders. It's a good future, one worthy of the church and worthy of our labors.

And so I close by quoting the words of John Vincent, who wrote more than a century after the founding of the first Sunday School and more than a century ago:

> In the interest of the church, the home, the state and society, we who represent the Sunday school sing with Robert Browning our song of hope:
>
> 'The best is yet to be, the last
> For which the first was made.'[21]

21. John Vincent, "A Forward Look for the Sunday School," p. 164.

By Their Praxis You Shall Know Them

by Edward A. Powers

Paulo Friere has helped American church educators to discover the word *praxis,* the measure of intent and happening in an educational endeavor. The word comes from the Greek, meaning *doing* or *action.* Webster defines *praxis* as "the exercise or practice of an art, science, or skill."

The word *praxis* refers to what really goes on—the patterns, effect and practice of an enterprise. In seeking to understand the word's meaning we ask questions such as: How do our operations or practice reflect our goals and intent? What is the effect of our enterprise? What, in fact, do people learn and experience in a given educational operation? It is by their fruits (praxis) that one knows the identity of the species—so Jesus taught us.

Friere himself, of course, writes out of a situation in which the majority of persons are oppressed by unjust structures and maldistribution of wealth and resources. In that situation, educational *praxis* either furthers domination or fosters liberation. To seek to educate without taking seriously the context of oppression or liberation in which people's lives are set is almost surely to maintain the *status quo.* In that situation, the praxis will sustain domination and oppression.

We often seem to concentrate on particular forms, programs, and traditions when we plan the church's educational enterprise rather than to look hard at the whole life of the church, at the faith roots, at context and at praxis. It is easy to forget that the church throughout its history has used a variety of forms for its educational ministry. The Sunday School is only one and, as history goes, a quite recent one on the church's horizon.

Jesus taught his disciples in what today we might call an extended family or a commune. His was an itinerant educational

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While this paper was not part of "Confrontation: Sunday School," the editors of the Review thought it useful to place the future of Christian education in a wider perspective. Dr. Powers is General Secretary of the Division of Education, Evangelism and Extension of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

ministry. In the first-century church, non-believers or candidates for membership were called catechumens (from the Greek "to teach"). They remained in the outer chambers of the church until their preparation qualified them to participate in the sacraments and the rest of the church's life.

The Reformers sought to make the Bible available to the laity so it could become a central instrument of self-instruction. Thus they translated the Bible into the people's language. This meant that people could learn afresh the meaning of faith. The variety of educative forms which the church has used throughout its history includes the sermon, theatre in the market place and the sanctuary, the itinerant missionary or catechist, monastery, parochial schools, confirmation classes, the college and the seminary, and, latterly, the summer camp, vacation school, Sunday church school, and adult education program.

Several historians[1] have reminded us of the roots of the Sunday School movement. It began in England as a way to teach illiterate youths. As it developed in the United States in the nineteenth century, it was often anti-clerical, non-denominational and outside the life of the church. To this day, many Sunday Schools have separate everything—officers, facilities, worship, and treasury. More often than not throughout its history on the American scene, the Sunday School has been regarded as an instrument of evangelism rather than education.

Horace Bushnell's *Christian Nurture* introduced the notion that a child is to grow up in such a way that he or she never knows an identity other than that of being Christian. Bushnell stressed the importance of context and environment (although he did not use those words) in the nurturing of the young. Such nurture was to be seen in contrast to the heavy reliance on conversion and suddenness of faith response. Bushnell's emphasis was particularly upon the family.

These historical comments remind us of the importance of looking afresh at our purposes and options as we face education's shape for our future.

Dimensions of a Whole Praxis

Any realistic assessment of a congregation's educational praxis needs to touch the variety of educative forces which help form

1. See especially Elliott Wright and Robert W. Lynn, *The Big Little School* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 108 pp.

the person's sense of identity. These fall into four categories: what the whole life of the church teaches; the community's educative instruments; the family and its bearing upon its members, particularly the young; and the educational programs sponsored by the congregation. Let us look at each of them in turn:

Most people learn what a church is and what the faith is about as they experience a live church in the flesh. Whatever its preaching or formal teaching, a congregation has a life style, values, patterns of relating to persons and the world at large, elements of faith, a particular kind of environment. A church that has sanctuary seats in the round says something different about how people relate to each other and to God than one with fixed pews all facing a single direction. A church whose facilities are used to the hilt for a range of community and program activities forty or more hours a week says something different than the building which is locked all but two hours on Sunday morning. A congregation whose budget is spent totally at home and mostly on staff and furnishings conveys a different image of what the church is for than one whose budget is split fifty-fifty (one half for us and the other half for others).

These "teachings" are often part of what is sometimes called the "hidden curriculum." The phrase—"the whole life of the church teaches"—is hardly very helpful until we unpack its meaning. True, the total impact of a given congregation is what conveys to persons the values and central meanings of that body's life. But the whole is made up of a variety of pieces: pastor, worship service, physical environment, public presence, priorities, style of human relationships, the things it cares most about, budget, forms and styles of organization, and the like. We tend to teach more intensively when we do not intend to teach than when we do.

When we speak of the second dimension, the community's instruments of education, we mean not only such explicit educational enterprises as schools, but also such implicit schools of life as pool halls, gangs, advertising media, movies and television, peer groups, and civic values. The church which cares about education will look hard at the *praxis* of community institutions and forces of socialization. Again, the hidden curriculum is the most telling: the presence or absence of integrity in public officials, the nurture of violence, the structures of prejudice, "what you can get away with." The church body that is serious about education will have to challenge the power brokers and the opinion makers. It will have to unmask the hidden assumptions by which standards

are set. To be "in, but not of, the world" does not involve silence on these matters.

As Bushnell made clear as early as 1847, the family (and whatever is its functional equivalent for those who do not live in family situations) gives to its members a sense of what community and self are. Long before a young child discovers the words of the Bible, he or she discovers all the great themes of the Bible: reconciliation, atonement, justice and injustice, love, joy, hope, trust, faith, alienation, compassion. These are learned in the earliest of relationships and conveyed by experience both in the negative and in the positive.

The church that is serious about education will seek ways to sustain the family and familial settings to which it has access. It will do this in part by dealing with systemic issues like adequate income, television fare, morality in public life, opportunities for recreation, leisure, and employment. It will find ways in which parents can strengthen their own faith and life as well as their capacity to function as mother and father. It will provide ways in which the whole family can celebrate its life together. It will offer other adult role models and provide alternative examples of forms of family life. It will avoid the assumption that all families are nuclear or that one must "come coupled" to be acceptable in the Lord's or the church's sight. Finally, the congregation will seek in a supportive fashion to be an extended family for all who touch its life.

The fourth dimension takes its full place in the context of the others. Education as planned teaching/learning experiences has the best chance of doing its job in the full context of dealing with other dimensions of church and community which also teach the faith or its obverse. A Sunday church school program which does not stand in isolation from the rest of the church but provides perspective on other experiences stands a better chance of being the most valuable hour of the week. The youth group through which young people generalize on their weekly experiences and the other dimensions of the church's life will have a chance of being incarnational. The Word will in fact be made flesh in the heart of their life's heartbeat. An adult education program through which adults develop a perspective on the issues to which faith calls them will offer the *praxis* of liberation and new creation.

Some Examples and Trends

I consider a number of new developments on the religious education scene to be reaching in the direction of a more adequate *praxis.* The first of these I would call the *holistic trend.* A number of congregations are beginning with the premise that the perspective of wholeness is fundamental to measuring their intent and effect. An illustration of one such congregation is found in William Beaven Abernethy's *A New Look for Sunday Morning,* published recently by Abingdon Press.[2] South Congregational Church in Middletown, Conn., of which Mr. Abernethy is the pastor, has focused upon the rhythm of worship, learning, and celebration. The two-hour Sunday morning segment is symptomatic of the search of that church to come at life, learning, and ministry whole.

Plymouth Church in Seattle has taken on the hunger issue. Over 100 families have covenanted to eat only half as much beef as previously was the case. They have been influenced by studies which indicate that the amount of grain used to fatten beef cattle would provide protein for others without its double use in fattening cattle to produce protein.[3] Alternate diets are being developed and used. Suppliers and the public are being helped to understand their rationale. Seattle understands hunger in a way some communities do not in that massive unemployment has happened over several of the last years. The churches and others have banded together to form Neighbors in Need, a feeding resource for hungry people. Money saved by the Plymouth families is used to support hunger groups and projects around the world.

Several denominations through Joint Educational Development have developed the Shalom Curriculum.[4] This is not a traditional curriculum in the sense of a series of books and courses all neatly laid out. It is a traditional curriculum in the sense of the root meaning of the Latin word *currere*: course, race course, chariot, running. It is a course to be run, as life is. Shalom's focus is twofold: the Biblical concept of *shalom* (wholeness, community, unity, peace, justice; Jesus is our Shalom) and the sense of the whole life of the church. Resources are prepared to help a congregation

2. William Beaven Abernethy, *A New Look for Sunday Morning* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 176 pp.

3. This issue is documented in a number of places including "Fantasies of Famine," by Frances Moore Lappé in the February, 1975, Harper's, pp. 51ff.

4. The background book to interpret this approach is *Signs of Shalom,* by Edward A. Powers (Published for Joint Educational Development by United Church Press, Philadelphia, 1973), 160 pp.

examine its life from the perspective of the Shalom idea. Various resources are available to help children, youth, and adults deal with such issues as "Why People Fight," "Learning to Be Free," "Shalom is Whole Community," and "Builders for Justice."[5] The key focus is upon the process by which people come to a fresh understanding of the Bible's claim to be Shalom makers and the ways in which their common life can make that happen.

The nine partner denominations in Joint Educational Development are developing a systemic approach to education in the church. The project is called "Christian Education: Shared Approaches." Each approach features a basic conceptual design, an understanding of teaching/learning opportunities and contexts, leadership resources, and media resources. There are four such approaches, each of which seeks to provide a lens through which a congregation can look whole at its intentions and its *praxis*.

The United Church of Christ is rethinking its approach to outdoor education under the direction of a task force which has caught a vision of the campsite as an "experimental outpost" for a new life style. Such a life style would foster a new sense of interdependence among human beings and within the eco-system. The concern for hunger, alternate diets, and the forces of economic injustice have led the Task Force on Outdoor Education to develop a new philosophy statement. In part, the statement says:

> We have a vision of a 'new earth' and some clues about how we can use our particular opportunities in outdoor education to work toward the embodiment of this vision. The dire consequences of our present life styles are daily and irresistibly made clear to us. The ethic of exploitation by which we have lived has rationalized a desecration of the land, life, and the interrelatedness of all creation to the point of our threatened extinction. A new ethic of 'wondrous responsibility' for the earth and its people energizes our vision of Shalom.[6]

Churches which have been having a failure of nerve on ethical issues are suddenly discovering that they have contributed to the Watergate mentality, whose consequences have so sorely and recently tried the nation's soul. I hope they will reach beyond the

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5. The quoted phrases are sample titles from the listing of resources published to augment the Shalom concept. For a full listing, write Division of Publication, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia, Pa., 19102.

6. "Toward a Philosophy of Outdoor Ministries," United Church of Christ Task Force on Outdoor Education, Room 911, 287 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10010.

values clarification stage toward that form of church life described by James Gustafson as

> a gathering of people with the explicit intention to survey and critically discuss their personal and social responsibilities in the light of moral convictions about which there is some consensus and to which there is some loyalty.[7]

Gustafson puts forward the notion of the church as a community of moral discourse. He suggests[8] that there are three criteria for this: the discourse is moral; the church understands itself to stand in some specific moral tradition; and the leadership gives direction to this effort in ways which inform the whole of the church's life. Watergate (which, after all, was brought to its course by the press and the Congress, not the church, which supposedly guards public morals) provides a new call to the church for moral understanding.

As I list issues which seem to me to be signs of hope and wholeness, I cite also the increasingly effective focus of feminists and others upon the issue of sexism in church life and in Christian education. They are helping us to understand the ways in which more than one-half of the human community has been denied images of wholeness through language, myth, symbol, and context. Their focus upon the Bible has dealt not only with the patriarchal context of much of the Biblical material, but with mistranslations in which words with no gender connotation are rendered male. They have helped us to understand that the God who is above gender must be freed from the masculine images and language which limit both deity and humanity from an adequate self understanding.

This essay has sought to convey images of wholeness and understanding through which those who plan for church education in the future can think and see new possibilities for their educational ministry. By their *praxis* you shall know them!

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7. James M. Gustafson, *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), p. 84.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 85-95.

Bibliography for Lay Christian Educators (1970-74)

by D. Campbell Wyckoff

Apps, Jerold W., *How to Improve Adult Education in Your Church.* Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.
A thoroughgoing introduction to adult education in the parish, intended to be used by local committees and adult educators who are looking for guidance in evaluating and changing their programs and approaches.

Babin, Pierre (ed.), *The Audio-Visual Man, Media and Religious Education.* Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum, 1970.
This first full-scale treatment of the idea that "the medium is the message" in religious education turns out also to be a first-rate book in religious education theory. Deals with "the new man" who sees, hears, and communicates differently, and makes discriminating suggestions on the use of the media in religious education.

Caldwell, Irene S., Richard Hatch, and Beverly Welton, *Basics for Communication in the Church.* Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1971.
One of the "Foundations for Teaching" series, this is a guide for independent or group study, developed around a model of communication: "Someone perceives an event and reactions in a situation to make available materials in some form conveying content of some consequence." Introduces the teacher to himself and his task in the context of cognitive perception theory.

Cully, Iris V., *Change, Conflict and Self Determination: Next Steps in Religious Education.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.
A "direction-finder" for today's religious educator. Mrs. Cully provides the context for discriminating innovation in religious education theory and practice.

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*The following listed books are considered the most significant works on Christian Education published during the last four years and are therefore recommended to churches and church educators. Dr. Wyckoff is Professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary.

DeBoer, John C., *Let's Plan*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970.
An analytical and practical handbook that puts the best of planning theory at the disposal of churches and other voluntary organizations. Shows the place for planning, the process of planning, and the role of research in planning. Detailed enough to be used by non-professional leaders.

Gillispie, Philip H., *Learning Through Simulation Games*. New York: Paulist Press, 1973.
Plans for specific games are groups under the themes of freedom, life, peace, love, happiness, and communication.

Haughton, Rosemary, *The Theology of Experience*. Paramus, N. J.: Newman Press, 1972.
An exploration of the experiential sources of religious life and thought in community, ministry, family, sexuality, and the spirit.

Hellwig, Monika, *Tradition, The Catholic Story Today*. Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Publishing, 1974.
Written to clarify the scope of Christian education for religious educators, by a theologian of first rank who is also quite at home with religious education thinking. The scope, or content, of Christian education is embodied in the life and work of the community of faith, here delineated in a dynamic and critical way. Within this context, faith can be invited, encouraged, and supported.

Jensen, Mary and Andrew, *Audiovisual Idea Book for Churches*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974.
Introductory chapters deal with theory and organization and are followed by twenty chapters on specific audio-visuals and their uses. This book may well replace others as a church's basic guide to the field.

Kemp, C. Gratton, *Small Groups for Self-Renewal*. New York: Seabury Press, 1971.
An absolutely straightforward, no-nonsense approach to the varieties of small groups and the processes used in them. Special help for religious educators is found in sections "In Teaching" and "With Focus on the Church," but the whole book will be invaluable for them. Probably the best book now available that spans the needs of the professional and the non-professional.

Lynn, Robert W., and Elliott Wright, *The Big Little School*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

A sparkling and refreshing history of the American Sunday School from its British beginnings to the present. Carefully analyzes and assesses the growth of the movement and the influences that have been brought to bear on it: evangelicalism, professional education, neo-orthodoxy, etc.

Moran, Gabriel, *Design for Religion, Toward Ecumenical Education.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

Incisive thinking on theology and education, leading to the conclusion that traditional religious education has actually lacked the essential religious quality, and that henceforth it must be set firmly in an ecumenical framework—that is, with a concern for all that is human. One of the most important recent books in the field.

Reed, Elizabeth L., *Helping Children with the Mystery of Death.* Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1970.

This excellent little book is carefully wrought from a lifetime's experience in working with children and their parents. Dealing adequately and sensitively with its topic, perhaps its most valuable asset is the inclusion of many vignettes from parents and others who have helped children with situations involving death. Includes a long section of valuable resources—Bible passages, poems, stories, etc.

Rood, Wayne R., *Understanding Christian Education.* Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1970.

A splendid addition to the major literature in Christian education theory. Organizes a wealth of historical, philosophical, and theological material around four key figures: Horace Bushnell, John Dewey, George Albert Coe, and Maria Montessori. A concluding chapter spells out the author's own position analytically, critically, and comparatively.

Rood, Wayne R., *On Nurturing Christians.* Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1972.

Cites the more obvious changes taking place in education, human relations, and ways of thinking at present, and proposes to interject Christian nurture into the situation to effect basic change. The process of nurture is analyzed (tradition, community, theology, and life-style), with suggestions on implications for life-span education.

Ryan, Mary Perkins, *We're All In This Together.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

Three Christian education theories are reviewed and evaluated: the preconciliar, the conciliar, and the "developing." The latter emphasizes "truly human living." This important book is the result of years of thought and experience at the very heart of reform of religious education, and the product is a seasoned and critical account of ecumenical significance.

Strommen, Merton P., *Five Cries of Youth*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

A brief but detailed report on a long and extensive interdenominational research on youth. The research reveals five major dynamics operating in the lives of church youth: low self-esteem, family conflict, social-action orientation, closed-mindedness, and religious commitment. The particular elements found to be involved in each of these are delineated. The book is well written, challenging to the specialist and understandable to the layperson.

Westerhoff, John H., III, *Values for Tomorrow's Children*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970.

An exciting and challenging book for religious educators, evaluating past and present plans and performance, and presenting vigorous alternatives for the future. Westerhoff knows and appreciates what has gone into the religious education tradition and program in the past, and seeks a correspondingly new vitality for the enterprise today and tomorrow.

Westerhoff, John H., III (ed.), *A Colloquy on Christian Education*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1972.

A collection of reprints from the magazine, "Colloquy." Varied overview of positions and practical suggestions in Protestant religious education at the present time. A "smorgasbord" that indicates considerable vigor in the field.

Westerhoff, John H., III, and Gwen Kennedy Neville, *Generation to Generation*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974.

An anthropologist and a religious educator team up to deal with religious socialization and its implications for religious education. The book is cast in a dialogical form, and consists of a variety of materials put together to provide data upon which the reader may base further investigations and judgments. The two main sections of the book deal with the dynamics of religion, cultures, and education and with the processes of their interaction through the life-cycle.

An Educational Use Guide

by John H. Westerhoff

Suggest that your Board of Christian Education, church school teachers, or other interested adults read this issue of the Duke Divinity School Review.

Plan a workshop to discuss your program of Christian education and your hopes for your Sunday School. A few suggestions follow for a five-hour gathering on an afternoon or evening.

1. Share a meal together and/or have a short hymn sing.
2. For about thirty minutes have each person share with another person his/her faith biographies (the story of how he/she became the person of faith or unfaith he/she now is), their memories of Sunday School and how it influenced their growth in faith. Ask the other person to listen carefully and note the most significant influences and memories.
3. Share these significant influences and memories with the total group, recording them on newsprint for everyone to see. When all have been reported, strive to group them together into major categories such as (a) pageants and plays, (b) opportunity for responsibility, (c) feelings of belonging, (d) concern of persons and so forth.
4. For about thirty minutes, form small groups of four or five persons. Ask them to describe their Sunday School program today. What is it like; what are its greatest strengths and weaknesses; what are their desires and hopes for it in the future? Have them list their thoughts on newsprint.
5. Share the newsprint sheets and have one person in each group report their conclusions.
6. Take a fifteen-minute coffee break.
7. For another thirty minutes return to small groups. Ask them to discuss their findings in the light of the articles in this Review.
8. Now ask each group to take another half hour and develop concrete suggestions for their Sunday School program during the next year. List their suggestions on newsprint.

9. Share small group reports with the total group.

10. Share a meal together and/or participate in a celebration liturgy or evening prayer.

An alternative

Following the first three steps as outlined, proceed in this manner:

4. For thirty minutes discuss in small groups all the articles in the Duke Divinity School Review in the light of their own discoveries, but especially have them share their thoughts on "A Future for the Sunday School."

5. Ask persons to take fifteen minutes and write a short newspaper article describing the Sunday School of their dreams. Pretend it is 1980. Have them explain what is going on in their visionary Sunday School, not the Sunday School they think *will be* or even are sure *can be,* but the Sunday School they *hope* will be.

6. In small groups of five have each person share his/her visions of the Sunday School. Ask the others to note anything they hear in another person's news article about which they are enthusiastic. Put these on newsprint and place the newsprint around the walls of your room.

7. Take a fifteen-minute coffee break. Ask everyone to walk around the room and read the newsprint sheets.

8. Have persons return to their small groups and ask them, for thirty minutes, to brainstorm ideas of what they might do next year in their Sunday School that would encourage them to reach the dreams of their 1980 Sunday School. Put these on newsprint.

9. Have each group report, and ask the total group to rank order these suggestions. Take those ideas people like best and divide your total group into small groups to work on the details of these most popular ideas.

10. After thirty minutes of small group work share your reports at a meal, celebration, or evening worship service.

Book Reviews

Justice and Mercy. Reinhold Niebuhr. Edited by Ursula Niebuhr. Harper and Row. 1974. 137 pp. $5.95.

It is curious and unfortunate how quickly, in the history of Christian thought, a particular thinker becomes typed or stereotyped as playing on one motif or theme. So with Niebuhr, who, since his death in 1971, is associated with theological "realism" and is chiefly remembered for his critiques of the political issues of his day, and for his restoration of the classical doctrine of man's sin, against the ebullient optimism of the Enlightenment and liberalism.

These indeed were crucial aspects of Niebuhr's theology, but in this collection of sermons and prayers, edited by Ursula Niebuhr, the many other profound aspects of his faith, his liturgical sensitivity, his Biblical rootage, and his homiletical skill are all amply illustrated. We should be grateful indeed to Mrs. Niebuhr for editing this posthumous volume of sermons, most of which were preached at university chapels or at Union Seminary, together with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

Many of the familiar Niebuhrian themes are heard: the presumptions and prides of man, the need for repentance and contrition as preconditions for receiving grace, the moral ambiguities of human behavior. In an analysis of the "hazards and the difficulties of the Christian ministry," he forewarns seminarians at Union that "nothing is more insufferable than a professional holy man in the pulpit who pretends to all the Christian virtues . . . He may have entered the ministry because he is an exhibitionist at heart." (p. 131)

But the dominant theme is in the major key: the affirmation of God's grace and mercy, as known in Christ, that goes beyond His justice, a mercy that forgives and renews Christian action in both the private and the public arenas. In this volume the reader can glimpse the depth of Reinhold Niebuhr's own Christian faith, and can better understand what sustained him in his magnificent career as prophet to our times.

—Waldo Beach

In Search of a Responsible World Society. Paul Bock. Westminster. 1974. 251 pp. $10.

In the year of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in November) this is an invaluable, perhaps an imperative, book. The only previous comprehensive survey of this kind was written, ironically, by a Roman Catholic (Edward Duff, *The Social Thought of the World Council of Churches,* 1956); a lot has happened in the past two decades. A new generation of Christians has never heard of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, or even of "Amsterdam, 1948." An older generation has forgotten—or never really heard.

For the amazing thing about Bock's review, sprinkled with abundant quotations, is its prophetic—now "contemporary"—wisdom and relevance. The ecumenical leaders of the past sixty years were farsighted and foresighted to an incredible degree.

> We do not consider the state as the ultimate source of law but rather as its guarantor. It is not the lord but the servant of justice. (Oxford, 1937)

> As to whether we should center upon individual conversion or upon social change to realize this kingdom, we reply that we must do

> both. . . . There is such a thing as an evil soul, but there is also such a thing as an evil system. (Madras, 1938)
>
> Defense against Communism [in certain Asian countries] might become a means of suppressing the movement of national liberation and social justice in the country. (Lucknow, 1952)
>
> Any discrimination against human beings on the grounds of race or color, any selfish exploitation and any oppression of man by man is, therefore, a denial of the teachings of Jesus. (Jerusalem, 1928)
>
> Violence is very much a reality in our world, both the overt use of force to oppress and the invisible violence perpetrated on people who by the millions have been or still are the victims of repression and unjust social systems. (Geneva, 1966)

After a brief historical sketch, Bock deals with ecumenical thinking in five main areas: political-economic orders, war, communism, race, economic and social development. In the effort to cover sixty years of changing and often controversial Christian ethics, the author sometimes oversimplifies, sometimes blurs the continuity, sometimes loses the sense of vital, active, personal, existential involvement. Somewhat disconcertingly, his subheadings are not (as in most books) sectional topics, but journalistic clues to the next few lines. (For example, "The Churches Support the United Nations"—a subject inadequately brushed by elsewhere—introduces seven lines on the U.N. from Uppsala, 1968, and seven other paragraphs not one of which mentions the United Nations.) Each chapter concludes, helpfully, with a Summary (which does fulfill that claim, a bit abruptly) and "Correlation with Roman Catholic Social Thought."

One might raise cautions about the precise language of the titles. This is not so much *In Search of a Responsible World Society* as "in search of a responsible Christian (Protestant-Anglican-Orthodox) approach to world society." It is not merely what the sub-title calls "The Social Teachings of the World Council of Churches," but of all the conciliar, ecumenical agencies and conferences and pronouncements, beginning with the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, 1914. Bock notes, but does not always himself observe, the distinction between study conferences and official W.C.C. assemblies or statements (similarly disregarded by Paul Ramsey in *Who Speaks for the Church?*). One may question, too, whether predominantly Protestant ecumenical views should be labelled "social teachings" in the Roman Catholic authoritative sense (note that Father Duff used the term *Social Thought of the W.C.C.*). Certainly one of the critical failures of the ecumenical movement in this area has been its tendency to "pontificate" to its constituency and to world governments, instead of achieving effectual education.

One final caution: this very useful and comprehensive little volume deals with a limited scope of Christian activity, its *social* concern. It does *not* review W.C.C. accomplishments in evangelism, dialogue with other faiths, ministries to students and laity, the theological contributions of Faith and Order. It would be totally unfair to use this compendium of history and quotation, unsurpassed in its limited field, to "prove" the World Council's preoccupation with this world at the alleged neglect of Biblical and evangelistic commitment. As Bock reminds his readers, the Life and Work movement took as its slogan, "Doctrine divides, but service unites" (Stockholm, 1925). But the World Council of Churches (bringing together Life and Work, Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism) still seeks even more centrally to fulfill another motto (Oxford, 1937): "Let the Church be the Church"—in the world but not of it.

—Creighton Lacy